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# Conference on Disarmament

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**Note verbale dated 3 November 2016 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament transmitting the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus on the twentieth anniversary of the withdrawal of nuclear weapons by Belarus**

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and has the honour to forward a copy of the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus on the twentieth anniversary of the withdrawal of nuclear weapons by Belarus.

The Permanent Mission would be grateful for the said statement to be distributed as an official document of the Conference among the Conference of Disarmament Member States and Observers.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament the assurances of its highest consideration.

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## **Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus on the twentieth anniversary of the withdrawal of nuclear weapons by Belarus**

Twenty years ago, on 26 November 1996, Belarus completed the withdrawal from its territory of the nuclear weapons that had been left behind following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Without any preconditions or reservations, Belarus renounced the possession of substantial military nuclear capability, thereby marking its commitment to peace and security and effectively setting the tone for subsequent nuclear disarmament processes in the post-Soviet region.

Nuclear disarmament is a complex process, with political and economic implications, and requires significant financial and human resources. Nevertheless, in the difficult circumstances obtaining after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine demonstrated their resolute and firm commitment to the goals of nuclear disarmament. By signing the Lisbon Protocol in 1992, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine undertook to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as non-nuclear-weapon States and became fully-fledged parties to the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START Treaty), until its expiry in December 2009.

As a non-nuclear-weapon State, Belarus concluded with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) a comprehensive safeguards agreement in connection with NPT. All its nuclear material was placed under IAEA safeguards.

The withdrawal of nuclear weapons from the territory of Belarus was completed soon after the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Twenty years ago, we anticipated that the practical steps we had taken in the field of nuclear disarmament would maintain the momentum of the disarmament process, which in the 1990s inspired hope of building a safer world. Today, expectations of progress on nuclear disarmament are far more measured and hope far more cautious. A consistent and realistic approach to nuclear disarmament issues remains, in our view, the sole possible means of achieving, step by step, tangible progress to building a safer world.

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