Statement by Ms. Virginia Gamba  
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At a Meeting on  
“Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors: The implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) in the Arab World”

Hosted by the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations  
Ambassador Abdallah Yahya A. Al-Mouallimi

22 April 2013 – New York

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), I would like to express my gratitude to our host, H.E. Ambassador Abdallah Al-Mouallimi, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, for organizing this important event.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an important supporter of the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004). It is not only implementing this resolution in a national context but is also actively promoting it regionally and internationally. And this support is not limited to words alone, as it has also allocated half a million dollars for national and other activities to promote its implementation.

Another example of its support came in 2010, when Saudi Arabia successfully hosted a Regional Workshop on implementing the resolution. At that time, Saudi Arabia stressed that the Kingdom supported all attempts to achieve international peace and stability, underscoring in particular its international efforts to implement measures needed to deny non-state actors access to materials used in lethal weapons.

Furthermore, as recently as January of this year, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia held—in cooperation with the World Customs Organization—a training workshop on resolution 1540 for Saudi customs officials. All of these activities, as well as this event, highlight the strong commitment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the full implementation of resolution 1540 and its unwavering support to regional and international efforts to meet the key objectives of the resolution.

The extension of the 1540 Committee’s mandate until April 2021 underlines the long-term commitment of the international community to the full implementation of the resolution. This work is fully consistent with the mandate of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) to pursue a world free of weapons of mass destruction. There is little doubt that the successful implementation of the resolution will continue to rely upon the commitment
and national efforts of the Member States themselves with the support of the 1540 Committee.

For this reason, in UNODA, we view our support to the 1540 Committee as an integral part of our overall activities, and we have been providing assistance in three key areas:

The first area is in facilitating national implementation efforts of Member States through regionally coordinated approaches and country-specific activities. This includes practical support to Member States in developing and managing their voluntary national implementation action plans and capacity-building roadmaps. Since 2006, we have organized, co-organized or supported 23 regional workshops with the participation of over 160 States, 35 international, regional and sub-regional organizations, as well as numerous civil society entities.

More specific to Arab countries: in 2007, UNODA organized a 1540 regional workshop in Jordan and additional workshops were also held in Egypt and Qatar in 2009, with broad and active participation of Arab States which represented almost the entire membership of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the League of Arab States.

The second key area of UNODA assistance concerns the promotion of cooperation and coordination between international, regional and sub-regional organizations (IROs) in facilitating the implementation of the resolution by their respective Member States. Our Office organizes meetings, at the working level, of relevant IROs to support the creation of formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate information-sharing of effective practices and lessons learned, as well as to identify relevant assistance requirements and programmes. These meetings, held in 2010 and 2012, in Vienna, have resulted in the establishment of a network of over 25 relevant IROs, including the League of Arab States.

And thirdly, UNODA is committed to building productive and effective partnerships with civil society and industry in support of the implementation of this resolution. Our Office recently co-organized with the Government of Austria the first Civil Society Forum on this issue, which involved the participation of 45 civil society organizations from different regions. The civil society representatives included several from organizations in the Arab world, such as the Amman Center for Peace and Development (ACDP), the Arab Institute for Security Studies (ACSIS), the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs (ECFA), and the Union of Arab Banks—all of which expressed an interest in an increased engagement on 1540-related issues. I note that at his presentation at this Civil Society Forum, the Secretary-General of the Union of the Arab Banks proposed to conduct a regional evaluation process amongst their membership to identify measures and tools for Arab Banks and financial institutions to use in support of the resolution.

In the same vein, and together with the Government of Germany, UNODA organized the first 1540 Industry Conference in Wiesbaden, Germany, in April 2012. As a result, the so-called “Wiesbaden Industry Process” was initiated which aims to develop a long-term sustainable cooperative process between the United Nations and the private sector in support of the objectives of resolution 1540. I also wish to use this opportunity today to inform you of a Journal entitled “1540 Compass”, which is dedicated to activities related to the implementation of that resolution. The Journal offers a platform for sharing experience and
advancing ideas that could assist the international community in bolstering existing cooperation and forging new partnerships.

We take these partnerships very seriously. In fact, most of UNODA’s 1540-related activities have been carried out in cooperation with regional organizations, in particular the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of American States (OAS). We also work closely with other international organizations, in particular, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and others. The increased engagement of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the League of Arab States on issues related to the implementation of the resolution is welcomed. UNODA stands ready to facilitate regionally coordinated 1540 implementation approaches.

Our support for implementing this resolution is made possible by the generous voluntary contributions of Member States as well as the European Union. Security Council Resolution 1977 (2011) encouraged States that are able to do so to provide resources to UNODA to assist States in implementing their 1540 obligations. I would like to encourage your Governments to consider providing voluntary financial contributions to the United Nations for this worthy purpose.

In closing, I wish to once again, express my deep gratitude to our host for this initiative and to assure you that UNODA will remain an active partner in supporting national, regional and international efforts to advance the implementation of resolution 1540.

I thank you for your attention.