Mr. Chair,

The proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical, or biological, remains among the most pressing challenges to global peace and security. The plain fact is that the price of an attack using one of these weapons – in human, political and economic terms – is one which none of us can afford to pay. Working together to strengthen existing non-proliferation and disarmament regimes – and norms - is therefore not so much a policy choice, as a security imperative.

At the same time, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that all countries meet their international non-proliferation and disarmament obligations. The international community cannot and should not tolerate cases in which states, such as Iran, North Korea, and Syria continually threaten regional and global security by failing to comply with their basic international obligations.

The upcoming year will feature a series of crucial challenges for the global non-proliferation and disarmament system. We must approach these with an unwavering commitment to concrete outcomes and progress. In a tense global context, this will demand that we overcome differences in order to advance our shared interest in preventing the proliferation and use of WMD and related materials, and therefore focus less on arms control and more on achieving disarmament objectives.

Mr. Chair,

As with the 2012 and 2013 NPT Preparatory Committees, our discussions this past May took stock of progress in implementing the 2010 NPT Action Plan. It remains clear that significant work will be required in the coming months to ensure a successful outcome at the 2015 NPT Review Conference, but Canada remains optimistic that this is within reach. Getting there, however, will require that all states make greater progress in the implementation of the 2010 Action Plan. This, combined with efforts to address outstanding cases of non-compliance, will be crucial to create the positive atmosphere necessary for enabling a successful outcome at the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

In this context, Canada continues to call – as a matter of urgency - for the commencement of the negotiation of a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. Such a Treaty would have significant value added for global security, including by formalizing existing unilateral moratoria on fissile material production. We are pleased with the ongoing constructive work being undertaken by the Group of Governmental Experts on this subject and are honoured to serve as its Chair. We look forward to the group’s final report, which will be submitted to the Secretary General and the General Assembly next year. We believe that the report, drawing on the Group’s substantive and technical discussion, will provide useful signposts for future negotiators.

Mr. Chair,

Strengthening non-proliferation bodies and norms remains a priority. However, at the same time, we cannot stand idle in the face of non-compliance that threatens to undermine these instruments and the security and stability they seek to guarantee.
In this regard, Canada remains deeply skeptical of Iran's nuclear ambitions. We continue to believe that a nuclear-armed Iran would not only have devastating consequences for regional stability and security, but also undermine the integrity of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is imperative that the international community take every diplomatic step required to ensure that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapons capability. Despite recent positive steps in the context of the P5+1 Joint Plan of Action with Iran, the regime's failure to engage in any meaningful way with the international community to address the long-standing concerns regarding its nuclear program raise serious doubts regarding the true motives behind its nuclear program. Far greater assurances, in particular related to the military dimensions of Iran's program, are required from Iran to address the international community's legitimate concerns regarding the nature of its nuclear program. These concerns have been reflected in repeated findings by the UN Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency, notably in the latest IAEA DG quarterly report (5 September). We believe that any sustainable long-term solution will require neutralizing Iran's military nuclear capability and placing of the strictest constraints on its nuclear program.

The international community must also continue to place pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and refrain from all further provocations, including nuclear and missile tests. Unfortunately, over the past year, we have witnessed continued proliferation activities from North Korea, including recent missile tests and increased activities at the Yongbyon Nuclear Complex. These provocations threaten regional and global peace and security. We call on North Korea to cease its belligerent behaviour, resume adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and comply fully with its Comprehensive Nuclear Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA and with UN Security Council Resolutions.

With respect to Syria, the destruction of the most dangerous of these chemical agents reminds us that the depravity of chemical warfare is still ever present. It remains incumbent on Syria ensure complete compliance with its obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and the Chemical Weapons Convention by completing the destruction of its production facilities and clarifying the unhelpful ambiguities in its initial declaration. Finally, the Assad regime's use of sarin and chlorine against its own people constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law, and cannot go unpunished. Canada was proud to co-sponsor the most recent draft United Nations Security Council resolution seeking to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. The international community must send a clear message to the Assad regime and to the world that those responsible for these and other serious crimes will be held accountable.

Mr. Chair,

Turning to the issue of conventional weapons, we welcome the positive outcomes of the third Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines, which, under Mozambique's able leadership, resulted in an ambitious forward agenda. More than eighty percent of the world's countries are now bound by the Convention, the vast majority of States respect its norms, and casualties from anti-personnel landmines are at an all-time low. However, anti-personnel mines continue to be used in some regions of the world, so we cannot relax our efforts. We encourage all States that are not yet party to join the Convention. Ending the era of anti-personnel mines is within our reach.

We also welcome the successful conclusion of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in San José, Costa Rica. Canada remains firmly committed to the goals of the Convention and is in the process of ratifying it. Canada's implementing legislation, the proposed Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act, is currently under consideration by our Parliament. Canada has never used cluster munitions in its own military operations, and has destroyed all of its stockpiles of these
weapons. Our government also remains fundamentally committed to addressing the humanitarian impact of mines and explosive remnants of war, contributing more than $215M to this effort since 2006.

Mr. Chair,

As technology evolves, and in the context of an uncertain global security environment, the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime and is more important than ever. It is our hope that this session of the First Committee of the 69th General Assembly will be productive and will set us on a positive path toward meaningful progress in the year to come. Canada stands ready to support you in this effort.