Statement by

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Mr. Chairman,

First, let me congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and assure you of my delegation’s full support throughout this session.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered by Mexico on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition and with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to add the following remarks in a national capacity.

I wish to begin by welcoming a very positive development. This time next year when we gather again we will meet in a world where the Arms Trade Treaty is in force, the first legally binding instrument to regulate the international trade in conventional weapons. My delegation welcomes its imminent entry into force. We have argued for a strong and robust Treaty from the very beginning, working with other countries and with civil society to achieve that goal. Ireland remains committed to ensuring that irresponsible flows of arms, which destabilise states and contribute to violence, conflict and gross human rights violations, are stopped. We are proud to be one of the first countries to sign the Arms Trade Treaty and among the first fifty states to ratify it, a year after the United Nations General Assembly voted by an overwhelming majority to adopt the Treaty. We must not be complacent - entry into force is just the beginning. Effective implementation of the Treaty’s provisions and universal membership are what will make a real difference and ultimately save lives. We would like to thank our New Agenda Coalition partner Mexico for hosting the first round of informal consultations on the necessary elements for a successful preparatory process leading to the First Conference of States Parties. We look forward to the second round of these important consultations hosted by our EU partner Germany next month.

The first ever resolution by the General Assembly called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons and all weapons adaptable to mass destruction. The primary motivation behind that resolution was humanitarian - it was a
recognition that weapons of mass destruction are a threat to the very survival of humankind.

The progress that has been made in relation to chemical and biological weapons has been significant. Through the determination and continued efforts of the international community, the overwhelming majority of States now agree that the possession and use of chemical and biological weapons in any circumstance is simply unacceptable and illegitimate.

It is precisely because of the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention that recent reports by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact Finding Mission which “found compelling confirmation” that chlorine was used “systematically and repeatedly” as a weapon in Syria earlier this year, are met with a sense of absolute revulsion and utter condemnation by the international community. While welcoming the fact that all of the declared Syrian chemical weapons have been destroyed as a positive step, my delegation believes these abhorrent crimes cannot continue and cannot go unpunished. We still recall the horrific images of children gasping for breath after ingesting sarin in August 2013 near Damascus which propelled the international community into action.

Just as the international community united to make chemical and biological weapons unacceptable and illegitimate and to halt irresponsible trade in arms, Ireland believes that, similar efforts must be pursued, and that similar progress can be made and must be made, in relation to nuclear weapons. After all, it is humanitarian concern which underpins the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) the preamble of which recognises “the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war and to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples.”

The obligation in Article VI of the Treaty to ‘pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control’ was clearly and unconditionally included in the NPT. It is an obligation which all States parties share. We believe the continuing failure to achieve progress
on nuclear disarmament militates against our efforts to pursue non-proliferation. The legal obligation set out in Article VI cannot be sidestepped and it cannot be ignored. It is unacceptable that forty four years after the NPT’s entry into force, and 19 years after it was indefinitely extended, the Parties to the Treaty have not yet elaborated the ‘effective measures’ which Article VI requires. With this in mind, Ireland, on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition submitted a Working Paper to the final Prep Com in an effort to promote long overdue discussions on those effective measures. We wonder how the ongoing upgrading and modernising of nuclear weapons can be seen as consistent with the commitment in the 2010 Action Plan to “pursue policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons”.

Ireland welcomes the recent renewed focus on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, which was of course the original motivation for agreeing the NPT. The Irish delegation has attended and participated in the fact-based discussions in Oslo and Nayarit. These served to increase greatly our knowledge of both the consequences and the risks of a nuclear detonation. Risks that are presented by the possible use, miscommunication, human error or systems failure are a major driver of our concern about nuclear disarmament. That concern derives just as much from the ever present threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons as from the slow pace of nuclear disarmament. Far from being a distraction for my delegation, the discussions have increased our knowledge about those effects and risks that are associated with nuclear weapons. We believe that the information and research on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons give rise to important policy decisions, given every government’s duty of care in relation to the health and wellbeing of their citizens.

We look forward to the third international conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons to be held in Vienna in December and warmly commend Austria for taking this initiative in such an open, transparent and inclusive manner, but more than that, the Vienna Conference as we see it is about strengthening the NPT. We further hope the Vienna conference will further enhance a successful outcome of the Review Conference of the NPT.
My delegation believes that we must continue all efforts to fulfill our obligations under the three pillars of the NPT to make the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons a reality. We are frustrated that the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty has not yet entered into force and call on the remaining Annex 2 States to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

Last year, we welcomed the Open-Ended Working Group on taking forward multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, as well as the High Level Meeting on nuclear disarmament. Ireland sees these meetings, which were mandated by the majority of States through the General Assembly, as a clear expression of a growing desire for progress on nuclear disarmament.

As we approach the 2015 NPT Review Conference, my delegation wishes also to express our support for the tireless efforts of Ambassador Laajava of Finland and all the stakeholders involved in discussions to convene a conference on establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMD. We strongly hope that this conference will take place soon as an important contribution toward the full implementation of the 1995 Resolution.

In 1946, the international community recognised for the sake of humanity the necessity of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. Nearly 70 years on this necessity has not diminished. If anything, with increased knowledge of the risks involved, there exists a pressing duty of care for all governments, especially given the impressive research carried out by UNIDIR into international response capacity in the event of a nuclear detonation. There is both a moral and a legal imperative to pursue collectively the interlinked goals of the NPT. For these reasons, my delegation will be looking to the 2015 NPT Review Conference with renewed ambition to ensure the obligations of the NPT and the 2010 Review Conference Action Plan are met. This includes real and tangible progress towards nuclear disarmament through the elaboration of effective measures under Article VI, because later may simply be too late.