9 October 2014

Chairperson,

My delegation wishes to congratulate you on your appointment as Chairperson of the 2014 UN First Committee and to associate itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Group and the New Agenda Coalition.

Chairperson,

While some advances have been made during the past year in strengthening the multilateral disarmament and international security environment, much remains to be done. Progress on the various undertakings towards disarmament has yet to be realised. Of particular concern is the continuing impasse in the UN disarmament machinery established under the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament in 1978. The 18-year stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the lack of agreement in the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) are undermining the multilateral system. Similarly, the UNDC has failed to make any substantive recommendations to the UN General Assembly for fifteen years. These multilateral bodies need to be revitalized so that they can again discharge their respective mandates.
The general lack of progress on nuclear disarmament is frustrating to the vast majority of UN Member States. Achievements in the area of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation remain particularly uneven. The regime established by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is constantly re-affirmed by the majority of the international community, yet the nuclear disarmament pillar of the Treaty remains neglected, in contrast to the progress made in strengthening nuclear non-proliferation. It is South Africa’s firm belief that nuclear weapons do not provide security, but rather exacerbate insecurity.

The Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons held in Nayarit, Mexico in February 2014 reminded us of the devastating impact that a nuclear detonation would have. The very existence of nuclear weapons means that humanity faces the peril of a nuclear catastrophe. South Africa welcomes follow-up efforts that highlight the humanitarian consequences of these weapons.

We are equally concerned about the failure to convene a Conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It remains our hope that this Conference will be convened without further delay.

In the area of chemical weapons, South Africa welcomes the progress made towards the destruction of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. No cause could ever justify the use of such weapons or any other weapon of mass destruction by any actor under any circumstances.
Chairperson,

In the area of conventional weapons, South Africa has on many occasions expressed concern about the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions. As a Signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which has been submitted to our Parliament for ratification, South Africa is ready to play its part on the journey towards a world free of cluster munitions. With regard to landmines, South Africa was honoured to be one of the ‘Friends of the President’ that were responsible for the drafting of outcome documents for the Third Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine-Ban Convention. It is our hope that the next five year cycle will accelerate the implementation of the provisions of the Convention especially in the areas of victim assistance, universalization and compliance. My country stands ready to contribute towards creating a better world for all – one that is free of anti-personnel mines.

South Africa continues to believe that the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons (UNPoA) represents the central, universally agreed set of undertakings to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and that its full implementation remains as relevant today as when it was adopted in 2001. Apart from national implementation efforts, the full implementation of the entire UNPoA, including those related to international co-operation and assistance remain of critical importance. Likewise, we look forward to the entry-into-force of the Arms Trade Treaty and the full implementation of this important instrument that would regulate international trade in conventional arms and contribute towards curbing illicit transfers.
My delegation stands ready to participate actively in the work of this year’s First Committee and to join you and other delegations in making a success of our work.

I thank you.