Concept for the 2014 Exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials in the field of arms control and disarmament

Sub-Theme: Increasing Capacities to Address Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Every year, the First Committee begins its thematic segment with an informal exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials in the field of arms control and disarmament. For years, this exchange has dealt with the same general topic relating to the current state of affairs in arms control and disarmament. Consultations with delegations have revealed significant interest for this panel to address a more specific topic, in order to stimulate genuine interaction on current affairs. The Chair of the Committee has therefore proposed a topical theme to guide the exchange at the forthcoming session: Increasing Capacities to Address Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Over the past year, there have been extraordinary efforts undertaken to deal with serious crises and other situations involving weapons of mass of destruction. Addressing these issues has often required actions above and beyond mandated activities. In some instances, this has necessitated the reprioritization of work, the rescheduling of normal activities, the reallocation of staff and the provision of extra-budgetary contributions. Real results have been achieved.

Building on these experiences as well as on those from the past, the international community is undertaking critical work to make sure future expectations can be met. This work ranges from increasing confidence in compliance with nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament obligations, strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of nuclear safeguards, learning the lessons from the chemical weapons investigation, ensuring the readiness to investigate any future allegations of the use of biological or chemical weapons, addressing the risk that terrorists may obtain and use weapons of mass destruction or related materials, upholding the ban against nuclear testing, and understanding the capability of the international system to deal with any use of nuclear weapons or any other weapon of mass destruction.

Ultimately, all of these efforts are aimed at achieving the full, effective and universal application of all norms and treaties in this field. The success of this work requires the continued mobilization of personnel, resources and cooperation from Governments, various agencies, civil society and other actors. Therefore, a panel discussion on the topic of Increasing Capacities to Address Weapons of Mass Destruction would be a timely opportunity to engage on what needs to be done to deal with both contemporary and future challenges.