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Statement on behalf of the Member States of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)

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on Disarmament Machinery in the Thematic Debate of the First Committee
of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). Since this is the first time that my delegation takes the floor, I congratulate you on your election as Chair of the First Committee.

The efforts of the international community in favor of promoting international peace and security make it essential to have a strong multilateral mechanism in the United Nations field regarding disarmament and non-proliferation issues. In that sense, UNASUR renews its commitment to the mechanism established by the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament in 1978 (SSOD-I), which introduced a set of bodies with different functions, but complementary, constituting what is known as the Disarmament Machinery of the United Nations, with the objective of strengthening the role of the Organization in the disarmament and non-proliferation spheres.

In this regard, UNASUR wishes to highlight the achievements obtained by the aforementioned Disarmament Machinery, reflected in several international instruments that constitute important milestones of international law, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention. UNASUR believes that any attempt to reform the multilateral Disarmament Machinery should be done in a comprehensive manner, in the context of a fourth Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament (SSOD-IV).

Mr. Chair,

We are very concerned that, for the last sixteen years, the Member States of the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, have failed to accomplish an agreement on a Programme of Work for the Substantive treatment of the items on its agenda.

UNASUR urges all members of the Conference on Disarmament to show greater political will to ensure the commencement of substantive work with the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work in order to start negotiations and to advance in the items of its agenda, especially those related to nuclear disarmament. In this regard, UNASUR welcomes the establishment
within the Conference on Disarmament of an informal working group co-chaired by Ecuador with the mandate of producing a robust and progressive programme of work.

In this context, UNASUR calls upon the Conference on Disarmament to overcome this prolonged impasse and to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on Nuclear Disarmament, in order to start negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention. In this context, we reiterate our support for the Secretary General five-point proposal on nuclear disarmament and his support for a nuclear weapon convention backed by a strong system of verification.

UNASUR believes this Convention must be negotiated within the existing multilateral system, either at the Conference on Disarmament or, if this is not possible, at the UNGA.

UNASUR is convinced that the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination. Until that goal is met, non-nuclear-weapon States must receive unequivocal, unconditional and legally binding assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by States possessing them.

Another interim measure would be the negotiation of a multilateral and non-discriminatory treaty on fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices that includes an international verification regime and meets the objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

We note with concern the possibility of an arms race in outer space. For that reason, we reaffirm the importance of negotiating a legally binding instrument in this field, in order to prevent the placement of weapons in that environment. We also reaffirm the importance we give to the strict compliance with the current regime on the use of outer space that recognizes the common interest of humanity in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Mr. Chair,

UNASUR regrets the lack of progress within the UNDC and that substantive recommendations have not been reached in their respective working groups on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. In this regard, while expressing appreciation for the efforts by the Chair of UNDC in 2014, H.E. Vladimir Drobnjak, PR of Croatia, UNASUR calls Member States to take the opportunity presented by the commencement of a new triennial cycle and exert all efforts in order to allow the United Nations deliberative body to make substantive recommendations on issues in the field of disarmament.

Finally, UNASUR would like to highlight the work being carried out by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) as an autonomous institute designed to undertake independent research on disarmament and related problems and to promote States' informed participation in disarmament efforts. We also recognize the importance of greater interaction and participation of civil society in efforts in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Thank you very much.