STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ELISSA GOLBERG, AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE PERMANENT MISSION OF CANADA TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA AND CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT:
FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 69TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
THEMATIC DISCUSSION ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) established by the UN General Assembly (UNGA 67) to make recommendations on possible aspects that could contribute to, but not negotiate, a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, has met twice since being established: first from March 31 to April 11 and subsequently from August 11 to 22nd in Geneva. I was honored to be chosen by the members of the GGE to act as Chair. It is in this capacity that I address you today. However, I wish to stress that the summary I will provide constitutes my own impressions of the work of the 25 experts participating in the Group, and is without prejudice to our final deliberations and recommendations.

The GGE's first two sessions have been substantive and highly interactive; it was the first time that many of the issues reviewed had been addressed in such substantive and technical depth by States in almost two decades. Bearing in mind that the GGE itself will not negotiate a treaty, as Chair, I have encouraged the Group to focus its work on the value added that the GGE can provide to negotiators by undertaking a fact-based and policy neutral analysis of all aspects of a future treaty. When appropriate, we have also sought to understand the broader political contexts in which we are operating. It is my belief that the format of the GGE has been particularly conducive to productive debates. Its informal nature and the time provided to the experts to engage on the issue has allowed for deep and technical discussions over a broad range of issues. As such, it has both complemented and informed the more general discussions on a treaty which took place in the Conference on Disarmament this year.

During its first session, the group heard initial presentations of expert perspectives on a range of potential aspects of a future Treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices and considered also the views conveyed to the Secretary General (see A/68/154) (A/68/154/Add.1; and at http://www.unog.ch/unog/website/disarmament.nsf/(httpPages)/384E4AAF5A1D7189C1257B7C003140CA?OpenDocument&unid=B8A3B48A3FB7185EC1257B280045DBE3) by seventeen states or entities not members of the GGE. There was wide agreement that a Treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices should remain a priority of the international non-proliferation and disarmament community. Experts reaffirmed the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein including its focus on a non-discriminatory, multilateral, and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty. Indeed, I saw a number of issues on which the views of most, if not all, of the Experts were quite similar. There were, of course, also issues where several differing perspectives were shared and a few where positions diverged significantly. These issues will continue to be discussed and analysed by the Group as it continues with its work.

Over the course of the first two sessions, the Group focused in technical detail on definitions, scope and verification. While we addressed each of these specific issues in turn, there was broad recognition that there is a dynamic correlation between the definitions, scope and verification of a treaty and that no issue can be addressed completely in isolation from the others. The Group also had the opportunity to explore questions related to the legal arrangements and institutional structure that would form part of a future treaty. Here too, there was recognition, that the shape of the
Overall, I felt that the first two GGE meetings were extremely productive, although considerable work remains to be done. Our next meeting will take place in January 2015, followed by a final session in late March 2015. It is, therefore, far too soon to speak of results. I am confident however, that the GGE will be able to thoroughly explore all aspects of a treaty and I am optimistic that this examination can lead to a report to the UN Secretary-General which will serve as a valuable reference for future negotiators, including the identification of possible means forward on some of the key issues.

In conclusion Mr. President, I would note that one sentiment that was clear from most, if not all experts present was regret that a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices has not already been the subject of negotiation, and some experts the important role that can be played by the CD noted in this regard, in the context of a balanced program of work. In the absence of the CD agreeing to and implementing a comprehensive and balanced program of work that includes negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, the GGE will continue its current deliberations consistent with 67/53, and submit its report to UNGA 70 with a view to making a substantive contribution to global peace and security.