Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin by extending my warmest congratulations to you on your election to preside over this important Committee and to commend you for the professional manner in which you are conducting our proceedings.

Located at the cultural crossroads of the Mediterranean Malta has consistently sought to act as a bridge between the countries to the north and south of the Mediterranean. Over the years Malta has sought to promote the broadest possible dialogue among the countries of our region on the various issues affecting our common security. Malta continues to support closer regional dialogue as a key to regional development, integration and security as manifested by its continued support of regional organisations and initiatives such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Western Mediterranean Dialogue (5+5) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean that Malta hosts and which serves to facilitate dialogue amongst Parliamentarians in the Mediterranean.

Developments in the Mediterranean and the numerous security challenges facing our region continue, to a large extent, inform and shape Malta’s foreign policy. The security challenges in the Mediterranean are far-reaching. How these will be addressed will have a profound impact not only on the entire region itself but even beyond. The powerful forces that have been unleashed throughout the Mediterranean make the need for further steps to strengthen security and cooperation in the region not only necessary but also urgent.

Mr. Chairman,

The nature and extent of irregular migration and the smuggling of human beings in the Mediterranean are increasingly turning this phenomenon into a serious threat to the security of the entire region. Most recently we have witnessed tragic events related to the smuggling of human beings across the Mediterranean, which have resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives. Malta calls on the international
community to provide a more coherent and robust response to this challenge. We believe closer cooperation is called for among the countries of origin and destination while transit States also need to be an integral part of the solution in addressing this challenge. Addressing this problem quickly and effectively will help save lives, improve security in the region by restricting unregulated movement of persons, and reinforce regional cooperation in the Mediterranean. Malta has continued to intensify its cooperation with IOM and UNHCR to address the issue of migration in Malta through a multifaceted approach, not least of which also addresses its humanitarian aspects.

Mr. Chairman,

The deteriorating situation in Libya is a concern not only for Libya and its people but also for the wider region. Malta believes that the worsening situation in the country could have serious ramifications that reach far beyond the borders of Libya. A protracted conflict in Libya will make worse an already dire humanitarian situation, increasing the challenges resulting from migration, and turning Libya into fertile ground for terrorists and extremists. It is important that stability in Libya is achieved so that the country could start building State institutions with the help of the international community and to this end we recognize the democratically elected Parliament as the sole legitimate representative of the Libyan people. We also believe that Libyans need to gather around a common political project through an inclusive process of national reconciliation. Malta supports all initiatives being taken by UNSMIL and believes that disarmament and national reconciliation are pre-requisites for Libya to move forward.

Mr. Chairman,

The threat posed by ISIL as well as the numerous foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq is another major concern. Malta recognizes the political urgency and necessity to counter the advance of ISIL and thus gives its full support to the efforts made by the coalition against ISIL. Although military intervention is important to assist the Kurdish and Iraqi forces in fighting ISIL, Malta believes that the wider political and regional context should also be addressed.

As Syria slides deeper into chaos universal principles and our collective values continue to be seriously tested. Malta urges all parties to the Syrian conflict to return to the negotiating table with a view to seek a political solution that would not only end the suffering of the Syrian people but also stem the spread of extremism and the advancement of ISIL.

Mr. Chairman,

Inevitably progress towards democracy and freedom in the Mediterranean has been uneven. As the people in the region have found the pursuit of liberty and justice has often come at a tragically high price. Malta supports neighbouring countries in their endeavours to establish functioning democracies based on the principles of justice, freedom and the rule of law. In this context, Malta is honoured to host the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law inaugurated on 18 June 2014 which will provide criminal justice officials from across North, West and East Africa, and the Middle East with human rights-compliant training to address terrorism, other transnational criminal activity, and related security challenges within a rule of law framework.
Mr. Chairman,

Malta works in concert with its partners in the European Union to further its own and the EU’s non-proliferation goals. Malta welcomes the entry into force in December of the landmark Arms Trade Treaty. The success and relevance of the ATT will depend on its effective implementation and universalization. Malta therefore joins the EU in urging those States that have not signed or ratified the Treaty to do so as soon as possible.

Almost half a century ago, in the belief that “devastation…would be visited on all humankind by a nuclear war” the international community adopted the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which also obliged negotiations in good faith for total nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international controls. Almost 50 years later this provision remains largely unfulfilled. The catastrophic effects resulting from the possible use of nuclear weapons make it essential that we move forward urgently with nuclear disarmament. Towards this overall objective Malta supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon free zones and the implementation of confidence-building measures worldwide, in particular in the Mediterranean region. Malta supports concrete and practical measures for the implementation of the Resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference, which calls for the establishment of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. We firmly believe in the establishment of a Middle East zone free of Weapons of Mass Destruction, which would strengthen the non-proliferation regime and instill confidence in the region. Malta fully supports the relentless efforts of the Facilitator, Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, and is hopeful that a Conference that would pave the way for the establishment of such a zone takes place as soon as possible.

Thank You.