Thematic Debate Other WMD and Outer Space (Disarmament Aspects)

Wednesday 11 October

Madame Chair

Thank you to Ambassador Khan for the comprehensive overview of his plans for the upcoming Biological Weapons Convention Review Conference. We see the Review Conference as an opportunity for States to agree practical implementation measures to take the work of the BWC forward. We are confident that the proposed schedule will facilitate a comprehensive review of the Treaty, as well as encompassing forward-looking elements.

We are looking for ways to ensure that the BWC remains relevant in a dynamic biotechnology environment. To this end, we support the development of an intersessional process which implements work already done on overarching codes of conduct and scientific cooperation and which is flexible enough to accommodate work on any new issues in the Convention's implementation which may arise during the course of the next review period. A strengthened implementation support capacity would result in concrete gains for the Convention's work, particularly in the fields of national implementation and confidence building measures.

New Zealand also attaches high importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the implementation work done by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The Eleventh Session of the Conference of States Parties will provide an opportunity to evaluate progress. We will be emphasising that all chemical weapons stockpiles be destroyed by 2012, the deadline in the Convention. We will also continue to focus on universalisation and implementation of the Convention, particularly in the Pacific, as well as on improving the current methodology for selecting sites for inspections.

New Zealand is also making a practical contribution to the destruction of
chemical weapons, through our contribution to the GB Global Partnership in Shchuchye, Russia.

Madame Chair.

While I have the floor, let me briefly address the disarmament aspects of outer space. It is in all our interests to preserve space for the development of peaceful technologies and scientific exploration. Preventing the weaponisation of outer space is fundamental to safeguarding our ability to access space resources, both now and in the future. New Zealand supports work towards a more comprehensive legal framework regulating the demilitarisation of space. Arguments that there is no current arms race in space, and therefore no need to address this issue, ignore the preventive benefits of adopting a precautionary approach. As an interim step, there is an important role for transparency and confidence-building measures with regard to outer space.