Statement

by

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Deputy Commissioner of the Federal Government
for Arms Control and Disarmament

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General Debate

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(Check against delivery)
Mr. Chairman,

Please allow me to express our congratulations to you, Ambassador Miloš Koterec, on the assumption of the chair of the First Committee. I should also like to extend our congratulations to all members of the Bureau.

We would like to associate ourselves with the statement of the European Union.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are among the most pressing challenges of our time. We have to do all we possibly can to ensure that weapons of mass destruction do not become the curse of our age. It is our aim, on the one hand, to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons and, on the other hand, to reduce and finally eliminate the existing stockpiles of these weapons. These are two sides of the same coin.

This year, we have seen progress again in our efforts to promote disarmament and strengthen the global non-proliferation regime, with New START and the successful conclusion of the Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). All participants of the Review Conference confirmed the non-proliferation obligations of the Treaty and expressly committed themselves to the goal of completely eliminating all nuclear weapons. "Global zero" has been endorsed as the common objective of NPT member states. A world without nuclear weapons is certainly a long-term vision, but even a marathon begins with first steps.

These developments are a good start for the new decade, which we want to make a decade of disarmament. But there is a lesson to be learnt from the short-lived success of the 2000 NPT Review Conference: We must not relent in our efforts and we will only be successful if we work together to maintain this momentum.

On September 22, the Foreign Ministers and Representatives of ten countries from different regions of the world, among them German Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Guido Westerwelle, met in New York at the initiative of Australia and Japan. At this meeting, they stated the intention to work together to promote swift and thorough implementation of the Action Plan adopted by the NPT Review Conference in May 2010, advance the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agendas and encourage progress towards a nuclear weapon free world. Copies of the joint statement adopted at this gathering have been made available in the room.
Germany has joined this initiative in line with its strong commitment to arms control and disarmament. We are determined to play an active part in further developing this initiative. To this end, Foreign Minister Westerwelle invited his colleagues to a follow-up meeting in Berlin. We consider arms control and disarmament to be integral parts of the global security architecture. We are convinced that substantial progress in this field will be greatly enhanced by bridging differences and by jointly working towards complete implementation of the objectives of the NPT. We are confident that this new initiative will enjoy broad support.

We consider two elements of the Action Plan adopted by NPT State Parties here in New York as particularly important. The nuclear weapon states committed themselves to reduce and eliminate all types of nuclear weapons. For the first time we have a comprehensive approach which includes tactical nuclear weapons in any future disarmament process. And beyond the need for further quantitative reductions: The commitment to reduce the role and significance of nuclear weapons recognizes the need to adapt security strategies and military doctrines and bring them in line with the objective of a nuclear weapon free world.

As a consequence, the statement adopted by our Ministers at the September 22 meeting expresses the intention "to focus on efforts to further reduce the number of nuclear weapons, including tactical nuclear weapons, and to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies, concepts, doctrines and policies". We have to address disarmament both from a quantitative and a qualitative angle. Our Ministers expressed their hope "to contribute to a growing consensus that any perceived security or political advantages of nuclear weapons are outweighed by the grave threat they pose to humanity". This is the consensus we need to foster as the foundation for a sustainable global non-proliferation regime and as motivation for running the marathon towards "global zero".

I thank you for your attention.