Mr. Chairman,

As it is my first interaction at this session, I would like to congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of this Committee. Our congratulations also go to other members of the Bureau. We are confident that under your competent leadership we will be able to achieve significant results in our work. Let me assure my delegation’s full cooperation with you during the work of the First Committee.

Before starting to speak on disarmament issues, allow me to congratulate Australia, France, New Zealand, and Wales for their brilliant victories in the quarterfinals of the Rugby World Cup 2011 and wish them success in the remaining matches. I also would like to acknowledge the teams of Argentina, England, Ireland, and South Africa for their extraordinary performance at this tournament in true spirit of fraternity which is so distinctive for this beautiful game.

Mr. Chairman,

We share the position that nuclear weapons continue to pose an existential risk to humanity and the regime set up to deal with these weapons remains to be incomplete. The NPT still lacks some significant elements to provide a comprehensive response to all the challenges, such as the entry into force of the CTBT, negotiations on fissile materials, as well as on Negative Security Assurances.

Although we welcome the outcome of the NPT Review Conference as an important development, we realize that we still have significant work to do in order to allow the outcome of the 2010 Conference to materialize in concrete results.
We believe that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a vital instrument which contributes to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation should enter into force in the nearest future. Renewed political commitments to pursue its ratification give us solid grounds for optimism. On its part Georgia continues to actively cooperate with the CTBTO Provisional Technical Secretariat to strengthen the monitoring and verification system.

Mr. Chairman,

We are deeply concerned that the international community continues to be unable to start disarmament negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, as we witness yet another year of stalemate at this forum. Further prolongation of the already long-standing impasse is absolutely unacceptable, as the time plays against us in this particular case. We are afraid that should this situation continue to remain without solution as it is now for another year or two, the international community’s confidence in the CD would start to dwindle fast, thus degrading the whole process to a state beyond the possibility to bring it back to life. Along with many other delegations, we also believe that this session of the First Committee should take up serious consideration of how the work of the CD should be pursued.

As many speakers before me emphasized, the illicit manufacture, accumulation, transfer and flow of small arms and light weapons remains to be one of the most challenging items on the international security agenda. Georgia reaffirms its commitment to play its role in the prevention and combating of illicit trade in and excessive accumulation of SALW, and strongly supports the full implementation of the UN Programme of Action. We are looking forward to actively contributing to the 2012 Review Conference.

We have had a chance to express our full support to the International Arms Trade Treaty initiative. Indeed, this mechanism must be considered as an effective instrument in non-proliferation of conventional arms. In this regard, we fully support the position expressed by many delegations that the measures to prevent the trafficking in conventional weapons can be effective if they are coupled with rigorous transfer controls on the legal arms trade, taking into account the criteria such as international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights, as well as the risk of abuse and diversion. This is why Georgia is fully committed to the negotiation of the Arms Trade Treaty. We consider the draft papers of the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee to the UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, Ambassador Roberto García Moritán, a very useful starting point for negotiations.

Besides all these known and, as we believe, well understood problems, new threats like cyber-attacks have emerged and are evolving rapidly. At the time being, we doubt that we have sufficient understanding of their potential effects on our interdependent world, and thus lack the instruments to adequately respond to these challenges. We believe that it is the responsibility of the United Nations, and first of all, the First Committee, to contribute to
scrutinising the problem and raising the awareness and understanding of this challenge in the international community, providing essential platform for elaborating mechanisms and instruments aiming at diffusing this threat.

Mr. Chairman,

Preventing the risk of nuclear terrorism, the need for compliance with obligations under Security Council Resolutions 1540 (2004) and 1887 (2009) and improving security for high radioactive sources is one of the main priorities of Georgia. My country joined the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and continues to support consolidating efforts of the international community to combat illicit acquisition, use or transportation of nuclear materials and radioactive substances.

The fact that in recent years there were several attempts of nuclear smuggling via now occupied Georgian territories of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia further amplify the sense of danger. All the attempts have been prevented by the Georgian law enforcement authorities. Yet in the absence of international presence these occupied territories have become completely opaque making it impossible to conduct verification activities there and thus the risk of nuclear smuggling through these territories has significantly increased.

Existence of so called white spots in the occupied territories, where international control mechanisms are either very weak or non-existent, creates fertile ground for illicit transfer and sale of conventional arms, their accumulation, as well as the illegal transit of weapons of mass destruction and its materials, including nuclear materials.

The example of my country once again proves that, despite numerous initiatives, the world continues to face serious proliferation concerns. Georgia, along with other states, is also deeply troubled that some countries continue to stand in the way of any real progress on international non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament efforts. The only effective measure to counter this trend would be a strong and unequivocal response of the international community to eradicate such practices.

As I spoke about the attempts to use the occupied territories of Georgia for smuggling of radioactive and nuclear materials, allow me to say a few words on the risk of conventional arms proliferation through these territories. As you are aware, the accumulation of vast amount of armaments is being continued in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.

Foreign military build-up has magnified exponentially in the aftermath of the 2008 invasion in direct contravention of the Six Point Ceasefire Agreement mediated by France on behalf of the European Union for the withdrawal of the military forces to the positions held prior to the
invasion. Our neighbour from the North continues its illegal military build-up in the occupied territories - instead of being closed down, the illegal military bases are being reinforced by additional personnel and equipment. Here are some of most appalling examples:

- A battalion of heavy (300 mm) multiple-launch rocket systems (so-called “Smerch” units) was deployed to a military base close to the occupied city of Tskhinvali in December 2010. This weapon is considered to be among the most powerful conventional weapons, resembling the destructive ability of the tactical nuclear weapons. This past January, the same base was further reinforced with tactical-operational missile launch system “Scarab B”, a.k.a. “Tochka U”, which can be equipped with conventional and nuclear warheads. The operational range of the latter weapons is 120 km. With this base being located within 40 km of the national capital, these installments have the potential to reach the territories well beyond the occupied region and even borders of the country.

- A multiple launch rocket artillery battalion of “Grad” weapons, as well as S-300 type surface-to-air missile battalion was deployed in the occupied region of Abkhazia.

- Plans have been revealed to additionally deploy offensive missile launch system of Iskander type and Mi-28 attack helicopters in the occupied regions of Georgia, clearly indicating the tendency of increasing militarization.

Overall, there are more than 11,000 occupation troops located in these two regions while six military bases, including one naval base, are being built.

In addition, as long as international control mechanisms are totally absent in those territories, there are no guaranties whatsoever that these arms, including the most dangerous ones like MANPAD, would not be transferred to various terrorists and criminal groups, which would pose serious threat not only to one particular region but to the whole international community.

Mr. Chairman,

We are convinced that in these circumstances, it is an appropriate time for the international community to stand up for the principles enshrined in the UN Charter. Georgia considers the First Committee a fundamental body to be seized not only with elaborating initiatives and ideas for addressing existing problems in the fields of non-proliferation and disarmament but also with most critical issues related to international and national security.

Thank you.