STATEMENT BY

AMBASSADOR ERTUĞRUL APAKAN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY

AT THE

GENERAL DEBATE OF
THE FIRST COMMITTEE

66. SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 5 October 2011
Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by joining the previous speakers in congratulating you and other members of the bureau on your election. We are confident that the First Committee will successfully complete its deliberations under your able leadership.

Mr. Chairman,

Turkey attaches great significance to global, overall disarmament and continues to support all efforts aimed at enhancing international security and stability through arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Turkey is a party to all major international non-proliferation instruments and export control regimes and we wish to see the universalization, effective and coordinated implementation as well as further strengthening of these measures. We therefore lend our full support to the revitalization of the international disarmament agenda through coordinated efforts. We would also like the United Nations to play a more effective and influential role in this field.

There has been some progress in the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation agenda in recent years. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon took a significant initiative by proposing a five-point proposal for achieving a nuclear-weapon free world in 2008. The adoption by consensus of resolution 1887 at the UN Security Council summit in 2009 and the adoption of a comprehensive Final Document at the NPT 2010 Review Conference are watershed developments.

Notwithstanding this progress, the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is still a long way off. Turkey wholeheartedly shares this vision and supports working towards this goal within the framework established by the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This is a well-balanced framework consisting of three complementary and mutually-reinforcing pillars, namely nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Turkey believes that an equal and balanced treatment of these three pillars will reinforce the integrity and credibility of the NPT regime.

We are pleased that the 2010 NPT Review Conference was able to adopt by consensus a comprehensive Final Document that contains far-reaching recommendations for concrete action aimed at making progress towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. Pursuant to the conclusions of the NPT Review Conference, there will a conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and the NPT Preparatory Committee will also reconvene next year. Now is the time to follow through our joint commitments. To this end, Turkey, together with nine like-minded countries, has joined the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) that aims to work towards implementation of the consensus outcomes of the 2010 Review Conference. Turkey also participates in the work of the Nuclear Discussion Group, an informal group established under the leadership of Kazakhstan that provides a forum for frank and open discussion on how to achieve progress towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Chairman,

We acknowledge the international safeguards system of the IAEA as the fundamental tool in global non-proliferation efforts. In this context, Turkey recognizes the need for further strengthening and universalization of the Agency's verification authority. We regard the comprehensive safeguards and the Additional Protocol of the IAEA as an indispensable
verification standard and we call on all States that have not yet done so to sign, ratify and implement the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, as well as the IAEA Additional Protocol as soon as possible. We believe that the strengthening of the safeguards system of the IAEA and promoting the Agency's role in advancing safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear energy are also essential for the sustainability of the NPT regime in the long run. It is our firm belief that States in full compliance with their safeguards obligations should have unhindered access to civilian nuclear technology, as provided for in the NPT. In our view, this would only contribute to the further strengthening and universalization of the NPT regime. Having said that, we must also ensure that all requisite steps be taken so that there will be no diversion of nuclear programs from peaceful to military uses.

Turkey recognizes that the cessation of all nuclear weapon test explosions constitutes an indispensable measure of both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, we stress the crucial role of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in achieving the objectives pertaining to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Turkey has honored its political, financial and technical commitments stemming from the outset and will continue to do so in the future. We will also continue our efforts to contribute to the early entry into force of the Treaty.

Mr. Chairman,

It is our firm belief that nuclear weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction cannot provide additional security for any country in this era. On the contrary, the possession of and the pursuit for such weapons undermines regional security and stability. Turkey therefore attaches great significance to and endorses all meaningful steps for the establishment of effectively verifiable zones free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, particularly in the Middle East. We therefore look forward to the convening of a Conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, pursuant to the decision taken at the NPT 2010 Review Conference.

We also look forward to the peaceful resolution of the current non-proliferation issues that are of common concern to the international community. In this vein, we attach importance to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and call on the DPRK to return to the Six Party Talks immediately and without condition. Turkey expects the DPRK to abandon its nuclear and other related activities in a complete and irreversible manner and return to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state.

We also consider it important that the outstanding issues relating to Iran’s nuclear program be resolved through peaceful and diplomatic means without further delay. As a neighbour of Iran, Turkey will continue supporting and facilitating the diplomatic process on this issue.

As regards the Conference on Disarmament (CD), we support revitalizing the work of the Conference to resume its role as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum. For this reason, we became a co-signatory to a letter, together with 40 other like-minded countries, requesting the convening of a General Assembly meeting on this issue. We are pleased that the General Assembly was able to take up this issue in a high-level meeting from 27 to 29 July 2011. While there are many different views as to how the CD should be revitalized, our preference is for this revitalization process to take place within the CD itself. Having said that, other efforts, such as the General Assembly meetings that took place in September 2010 and July 2011, could be useful to build momentum and convey the strong
expectation of the international community for the resumption of the substantive work of the
Conference.

While attempting to revitalize the work of the CD, we should not lose sight of the fact that the
existing problems are not limited to the CD, but cover the multilateral disarmament
machinery as a whole. This is not to say that the problems lie with the UN disarmament
machinery itself. On the contrary, as Mr. Sergio Duarte, High Representative for
Disarmament Affairs, very eloquently stated at the opening session of this Committee, “there
is no substitute for the UN disarmament machinery as a venue for multilateral cooperation. It
remains the world’s great assembly line for the construction and maintenance of global
disarmament norms.” We are convinced that the work of the UN disarmament machinery
could only be revitalized through political will and flexibility to be shown by all parties.
Various impediments standing in our way should be dealt with in a constructive manner and
by engaging the parties in order to alleviate legitimate concerns. Second-track initiatives or
new formations, where the participation of all concerned parties is not granted, will fail to
bring about the desired outcomes. We hope that the CD will soon agree on a substantive
program of work which will allow the Conference to commence negotiations on the Fissile
Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). We believe that launching the negotiations within the
framework of the Shannon Mandate in such a way as not to exclude the existing stockpiles
could accommodate the concerns of individual Member States. This may also allow the CD to
make parallel advances in other fields, including nuclear weapon free zones, negative security
assurances and prevention of arms race in outer space.

Mr. Chairman,

The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention are
also important components of the global system against proliferation of weapons of mass
destruction. Turkey does not possess any such weapons and reiterates its call for a wider
adherence to and an effective implementation of these Conventions. We actively support the
efforts to promote the implementation of these instruments in the Mediterranean, the Middle
East and the adjacent regions.

Proliferation of the means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction is another pressing
issue that needs to be effectively addressed by the international community. Indeed, Turkey is
concerned with the progressive increase in the range and accuracy of ballistic missiles. Within
this framework, we consider the Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation
as a practical step towards an internationally accepted legal framework in this field and wish
to see the universalization of this endeavour.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery become all the more
worrying in the context of terrorism. Hence, we fully support international efforts to prevent
the acquisition and use by terrorists of such weapons and to enhance the safety and security of
radioactive materials and sources. Utmost attention should be paid to prevent terrorists from
gaining access to nuclear material and other components of these weapons. We should devise
new measures to combat illicit trade in sensitive nuclear equipment and technology. In this
context, we call for adherence to and effective implementation of two important conventions,
namely the Convention on Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and the Convention on
the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

Turkey continues to support the work of the Committee established pursuant to UN Security
Council Resolution 1540, which complements the international efforts against the
proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Likewise, we regard the Proliferation Security Initiative as an important scheme complementing the existing international mechanisms.

Mr. Chairman,

The threat of proliferation is not confined to weapons of mass destruction. Proliferation of conventional weapons is also a cause of concern for Turkey. Indeed, the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons pose a significant threat to peace and security, as well as to the social and economic development of many countries. There is also a very well-documented relationship between the illicit trade in arms and terrorism. As a country suffering from terrorism, Turkey will continue to actively contribute to all efforts within the UN and other fora to foster international cooperation in the fight against terrorism, including through the establishment of effective norms and rules aimed at eradicating illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. In this regard, Turkey remains committed to the effective implementation and further strengthening of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and continues to support the conclusion of an Arms Trade Treaty, which should halt unregulated and uncontrolled trade of conventional arms worldwide and establish common standards for their global trade.

Another worrying issue in the field of conventional weapons is the scourge of Anti-Personnel Land Mines. As a party to the Ottawa Convention since 2004, Turkey fully supports the efforts for the universalization and effective implementation of the Ottawa Convention and the vision of a world, free from anti-personnel mines. Turkey has also been involved in the Oslo process on Cluster Munitions and actively participates in the ongoing work in the Governmental Experts Group on Cluster Munitions meetings within the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We share the humanitarian concern behind the international efforts to limit the use of cluster munitions.

Turkey also highly values and supports the role of the UN regional disarmament centers. We believe that these centers are instrumental in promoting the implementation of existing international disarmament and arms control norms at regional and sub-regional levels. We commend and support the activities carried out by these centers which encourage regional dialogue for furthering openness, transparency and confidence-building.

Mr. Chairman,

We hope that the deliberations of the First Committee will contribute to revitalizing the UN disarmament machinery and help us to eliminate the obstacles standing in the way of a safer and more secure world. I wish to conclude by assuring you of our delegation's full support and cooperation in bringing this session to a successful conclusion.

Thank you.