STATEMENT BY
H.E. Mr. Paul van den IJssel

Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
to the Conference on Disarmament

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Mr. Chairman,

1. Let me first of all congratulate you on taking up the chairmanship of the First Committee and assure you of the support of the delegation of the Netherlands.

2. Last year saw significant progress on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. At the NPT Review Conference, for the first time in many years, consensus was reached among the NPT parties. The result was a bold new Action Plan, which will be a roadmap towards the next Review Conference in 2015. Positive developments with regard to conventional weapons issues, such as the Arms Trade Treaty process, give further reasons for optimism. At the same time we remain deeply concerned at the persistent stalemate for over a decade in the Conference on Disarmament, thereby preventing it from fulfilling its mandate and in particular its failure to start negotiations on an FMCT.

3. These continue to be challenging times for the non-proliferation regime. The ongoing defiance of the DPRK of the international community regarding its nuclear weapons programme, Iran's lack of cooperation in allowing the IAEA to verify the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme, outstanding questions about Syria's nuclear programme, the danger of nuclear material falling into the hands of terrorists and other non-state actors; these are all matters of grave concern. Likewise the unregulated trade in conventional arms, and the illicit trade and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons adversely affect regional and international security and stability, fuel conflicts and armed violence and threaten the lives of individuals. These challenges call for a global approach, in addition to actions at the national and regional levels.

4. Today the Non-Proliferation Treaty is more important than ever. It remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, as well as the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI and for the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The Netherlands calls on States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon states. The Netherlands will continue to make innovative, practical proposals to implement the 2010 Action Plan. Non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control have always been and will remain cornerstones of Dutch foreign policy, with the Non-Proliferation Treaty as our basis and the Action Plan as our roadmap. This is an essential part of our commitment to strengthen international law and security. For us, non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control are all facets of the same diamond.

5. To support the implementation of the NPT Action Plan a group of ten countries, including the Netherlands, joined hands and formed the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI). At the ministerial NPDI meetings in Berlin on 30 April and New York on 21 September this year, we decided among others to focus our efforts on greater transparency in the way nuclear weapons states report their disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation efforts. At the same time we have stepped up our efforts for universal accession to the IAEA's Additional Protocol. This is vital to ensure that nuclear activities remain peaceful.

6. One of the crucial points in the NPT Action Plan is the agreement on practical steps, including an International Conference, towards establishing a zone in the Middle-East
Mr. Chairman,

7. The Netherlands considers the ongoing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament to be unacceptable. We deem the launching of substantive negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) more important and urgent than ever. The start of these negotiations is long overdue. We need to move forward, preferably within the CD, but we are prepared to pursue alternative routes. We consider the blockage of the whole CD forum by the refusal by one Member State even to start negotiations to be unacceptable and urge this Member State to join the consensus. This seriously undermines the principle of multilateral cooperation: with the membership of the CD come rights, but also responsibilities.

8. The effective functioning of multilateral disarmament institutions is vital for our security. The Netherlands deeply regrets that despite clear manifestations of strong political will on the part of the overwhelming majority of CD members and firm support for negotiations and clear calls from both the UN Secretary General and UN General Assembly, the CD has not yet been able to build upon the momentum in global disarmament and non-proliferation. We acknowledge the security concerns of all states, but the consensus rule in the CD must not be subject to abuse. The world cannot afford to stand still on the crucial issues of disarmament and non-proliferation, and to allow procedural issues to stymie real political progress.

9. The Conference on Disarmament, in accordance with the mandate it received from the SSOD-1, should be the place to forge multilateral treaties. However, given the continuing stalemate in the CD, the international community needs to reflect on all options to ensure progress. We are ready during this session to engage with you, Mr Chairman, and with all UN member states, on proposals to overcome the deadlock in the CD in order to take multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament negotiations forward.

10. The Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons is the cornerstone of international efforts to prevent the proliferation of biological weapons. The 7th BTWC Review Conference in December 2011 will be of vital importance for further work of States Parties to improve the implementation of and strengthen the Convention, during the next inter-sessional period.

11. Let me add that as president-designate, I look forward to working with all BTWC Member States during this session and in the remaining weeks until the 7th Review Conference in order to ensure for it the most productive outcome. Furthermore, during this session of the First Committee I will take the opportunity to reach out to those UN Members that have not yet joined the BTWC.

Mr. Chairman,

12. The Netherlands is firmly committed to the success of the 2012 UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty. We continue to be seriously concerned by the effects of the unregulated trade in conventional weapons and their diversion to the illicit market. Our action in this respect should be twofold aiming both at regulating the legal trade and preventing the illegal one. Our aim is a legally binding international instrument, setting the highest common international standards for the transfer of conventional weapons
with accurate transparency measures. We were encouraged by the promising results of the ATT negotiating process, notably at the July session of the Preparatory Committee. We call on all States to maintain the spirit of genuine engagement that characterised this summer session.

13. The Netherlands is honoured to host the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The Chemical Weapons Convention has an essential role to play in preventing the risks posed by chemical weapons. With the destruction of stockpiles well under way, now is also the time to start thinking about how to make sure that chemicals weapons will never reappear. In this context, we welcome the ongoing discussion on the future direction of the OPCW.

13 Finally, The Netherlands is committed to universalizing the CTBT and promoting its early entry-into-force. We recognize the security and civil benefits of the CTBT verification system, including the International Monitoring System and feel that the scope for expanding civilian use of the Monitoring System in other areas of early warning and emergency response should be explored. We will continue to utilize diplomatic opportunities to urge states to sign and ratify the CTBT.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.