GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMISSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS' GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATEMENT BY PORTUGAL

Delivered by His Excellency Mr José Filipe Moraes Cabral,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary,
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations

11 October, 2012
Thank you Chairman.

And allow me to congratulate you on your election and to assure you of Portugal’s commitment and support to the work of this Commission.

During the last year, significant efforts have been dedicated to review and update several important instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We hope these processes will meet the success they deserve.

In this context, we must all recognize that the outcome of the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, last July, was, to say the least, disappointing.

Nevertheless, we are hopeful that, building upon the President’s draft text of the 26th of July, a final Conference next year can deliver on a strong and credible Treaty, as mandated by the General Assembly.

We are also concerned with the continued threat of cluster munitions, that still kill and maim many innocent people, and we appeal to all States to accede or ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which remains the only legally binding international instrument governing the production and use of these heinous weapons.

Together with Ghana, Portugal has been entrusted by the State Parties to the Convention with the task of coordinating the universalization of such efforts. We will do our utmost to further this objective, in line with our commitment to disarmament, to Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, and to the protection of civilians.

Mr. Chairman,

We celebrate this year the 15th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on Chemical Weapons and I do not have to remind anyone in this room of the far-reaching contents and ambition of this landmark instrument.

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Portugal notes, with satisfaction, that three quarters of the World's declared stockpile of such weapons has since been destroyed and that the remainder is scheduled for destruction within a short period.

This is the result of our collective commitment to the objectives laid out in the Convention, as well as to the remarkable work carried out by the OPCW. With this in mind, we look forward to the 3rd Review Conference of the Convention and to the discussion of a renewed role of the Organization in a World free of Chemical weapons.

Collective problems demand collective action and collective answers.

As shown by the example of the Chemical Weapons Convention, an active, inclusive, multilateralism can provide those answers.

An active multilateralism where each State abides by its responsibilities as a member of the international community, participates constructively in decision making processes, and strives to make the World safer and more peaceful.

This is particularly relevant in terms of the Conference on Disarmament and its worrying impasse.

Not only negotiations of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty must start in earnest, as a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons must be fully upheld by all concerned parties.

These are issues that demand inclusive approaches. The Conference must become more open and its membership reviewed, bringing into its fold new countries and allowing them to participate in a common effort in addressing decisive issues that concern us all.

Along with other Observer States to the Conference on Disarmament, Portugal has called for the appointment of a Special Rapporteur to examine enlargement modalities without any prejudice to the outcome.

Such an appointment is urgent. The fact that several Countries wish to join the Conference both underlines its continued relevance and the confidence placed on it, as the political commitment of individual States to shared objectives.

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It is indeed an unique opportunity to further our common agenda which cannot and should not be shunned.

Mr. Chairman,

Another issue of concern for my country relates to the responsibility of States vis-a-vis the implementation of the international obligations and commitments they undertook under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In this context, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s unwillingness to comply fully with such obligations, as well as her continued disrespect of relevant Security Council resolutions, thus contributing to increased instability in her region, is of particular concern.

Likewise, we do not deem acceptable that no progress has yet been achieved in solving the outstanding issues between Iran and the IAEA, albeit the significant diplomatic efforts that have been deployed, and the international pressure that has been exerted on Teheran.

We once again urge Iran to seriously engage, without preconditions, in those diplomatic efforts and to give verifiable assurances on the peaceful purpose of her nuclear programme, thus fulfilling her international obligations.

Cases of regional proliferation have also met with strong international condemnation. They are serious sources of instability and pose threats to peace.

Portugal fully supports the initiative aimed at the establishment of a Nuclear Free-Zone in the Middle East and looks forward to the outcome of the UN Conference that will be held later this year in Finland.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, let me mention nuclear tests, which the International Community had decided to ban more than fifteen years ago. Regrettably, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, despite its almost universality, has yet to enter into force.

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We appeal to all States that have not yet done so, to ratify this Treaty, thus recognizing its central place in our disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and agenda.

I have mentioned, Mr. Chairman, what Portugal believes to be some issues of particular relevance to our work.

We remain committed to the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation and we hope that this session of the First Committee will make a substantive contribution to those objectives.

I thank you.