Statement by

Mr. Jim Kelly
Deputy Permanent Representative and Head of Delegation

at the

Sixty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly
First Committee

New York, 16 October 2012

Check against delivery
Mr Chairman,

At the outset, the delegation of Ireland would like to congratulate you on assuming the Chairmanship of the First Committee, and to assure you of our full support as you lead our work during the coming weeks.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU, the statement delivered by Sweden on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition and that by Switzerland on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. I would like to add the following remarks.

Ireland has always adopted a position of complete and unequivocal opposition to nuclear weapons. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains our only bulwark against the danger of these weapons. While the overwhelming majority of non-nuclear weapons states continue to fulfil their obligations under the Treaty, we are today confronted by serious proliferation challenges in Iran, which must dispel the many concerns expressed by the international community about its nuclear programme, and also in the DPRK. Meanwhile, progress in implementing the Treaty's disarmament agenda has been far too slow. For this reason, my country will support efforts in this and other multilateral disarmament fora to make progress on nuclear disarmament.

Ratification of the CTBT by all nuclear capable states which have not yet done so would represent an important confidence-building gesture along the road to complete disarmament. We call on all states, and particularly those states whose ratification is needed if the Treaty is to enter into force, to ratify it without any further delay.

We believe the proposed Conference on a WMD-free zone in the Middle East offers an opportunity for a meaningful discussion of this important topic. We urge all states of the region to attend and engage constructively with each other on progress towards a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We know that the discussions will be difficult, and the path will be long, but the prize, for the security of the region and the world, will be worth the time and effort.

We must recognise that any use of nuclear weapons would have calamitous consequences for humanity for generations to come. For this reason, my delegation would like to see the humanitarian dimension of nuclear disarmament explored in more detail as the present NPT review cycle progresses.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the fact that the number of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions has increased to over 75. This reflects the global recognition that the humanitarian cost of these weapons is simply too high. We call on all states, including the world’s largest possessors and manufacturers, to adhere to the Convention without reservation or delay.
Mr. Chairman,

Next year we will have the 3rd Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention. As an active participant and Vice-President of the Open-ended Working Group preparing the issues to be considered at the Review Conference, Ireland looks forward to developing new ideas on the Convention’s implementation and its universality. We have already made enormous progress towards ridding the world of an entire class of weapon of mass destruction, but our efforts will not be complete until the Convention has been universally accepted.

In this context also, I must again recall the revelations made earlier this year in relation to Syrian chemical weapons. Ireland urges Syria never to use these weapons in any circumstances and to arrange for their verified destruction as quickly as possible.

Like many others, we were greatly disappointed that it was not possible to conclude an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) earlier this year. We are nonetheless encouraged by the progress that was made under the skilful chairmanship of Ambassador Moritán. We are determined to maintain the momentum generated in July and we therefore support, on the basis of the Chairman’s draft, plans to convene a final conference next March to conclude our unfinished business. However, let us be clear that talks on an ATT cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely without result. If consensus cannot be achieved next March, we must be ready to consider other options in order to ensure that this critically important new instrument can be adopted without further delay.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, let me wish you every success in your task, and pledge our commitment to support you in completing the important work of this Committee.

Thank you.