First Committee 2012 – National Statement by Ireland

Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

Mr. Chairman

I wish at the outset to align myself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Last week, the Committee focused on considering ways of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. This is a key goal for Ireland as for many other countries. However, we know that human genius has developed other ways of annihilating itself and these also must be addressed.

In the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention, we have two instruments which clearly outlaw two categories of weapon; their use, of course, was already banned by the 1925 Geneva Protocols. With 188 States Parties, the CWC is close to universal acceptance; the BTWC, with 165, is further from that point. In both cases, Ireland strongly encourages all states to join the overwhelming global majority as quickly as possible – the universal acceptance of a total ban on these weapons would be a major achievement and contribution towards global peace and security.

However, ratification of treaties alone is not enough to ensure that these weapons will not be used. Implementation is the key which will make the difference. Only 47% of those states which have fully ratified the CWC, for example, have comprehensive implementing legislation and regulations. While Ireland acknowledges that there are many reasons for this relatively low rate, it is clear that further work is required to close gaps in the global system which might allow the spread of either weapons or the elements required to make weapons to states or non-state actors.

Cooperation and assistance to develop the means for implementation will be important in this respect, and Ireland wishes to acknowledge the work undertaken by the OPCW Secretariat to this end. In particular, the efforts to enhance peer-to-peer experience exchanges and focussed information provision are to be praised. We encourage the OPCW Technical Secretariat and states to provide information where they can and to take advantage of cooperation where they need to.

Similarly, Ireland fully supports the transparency measures undertaken in the framework of the BTWC as an effective means of building confidence and trust between all States Parties, an essential basis for achieving the total elimination of these appalling weapons.

Ireland regrets that it has not been possible to destroy all chemical weapons within the timeframe established by the Chemical Weapons Convention. We urge all possessor states to meet their destruction obligations as quickly as possible, in line with the relevant decision of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention. In this context I must also recall that chemical weapons should never be used in any circumstances. While the Syrian declaration that it would not use chemical weapons against its own people is welcome, Ireland strongly urges Syria to go further and not only never use its weapons against anybody, but to make arrangements for their verified destruction as soon as possible.
I would also recall here, Mr. Chairman, our support for the measures outlined in Security Council resolution 1540 and subsequent resolutions. Full implementation of the steps identified therein would help not only to prevent the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups, but also to effectively implement obligations under both the BTWC and the CWC.

Mr. Chairman,

The proliferation of ballistic missiles represents a threat to international peace and security both in its own right and as potential means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction. Ireland adheres to the Hague Code of Conduct, along with 133 other states. We encourage all states to adhere to this Code. We also believe that effective export controls must be an element of efforts to prevent missile proliferation, and in this context the Missile Technology Control Regime has an important role to play.

Thank you.