Statement on behalf of the Delegation of the Republic of Latvia
at the Thematic Discussion on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction
of the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly First Committee
New York, 19 October 2012

Mr. Chairman,

Latvia aligns itself with the previous statements made on behalf of the European Union (EU) and fully endorses the EU policy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In addition let me highlight some issues of particular importance to Latvia.

Mr. Chairman, for Latvia it is essential that we work together to limit conditions conducive to the proliferation of WMD, their means of delivery and related materials to, from and among States and non-State actors. The UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) provides a basis through which all UN Member States are bound to adopt necessary legislation to counter all possible illicit flows of WMD-related materials. Latvia along with other EU Member States employs a strict export control regime on WMD-related items thus striving to meet the requirements of the Resolution.

In this regard I would like to draw your attention, Mr. Chairman, to a particular subject in which Latvia as a seafaring nation is a stakeholder.

The maritime domain is intensively used by States for peaceful commerce and trade. Unfortunately it is used also for illicit trafficking of WMD-related materials. Yet the detection and prevention of possible WMD-related proliferation at sea is complicated by significant shortcomings in crucial areas. First I would mention Maritime Surveillance, which is a prerequisite in achieving a full situational awareness of what is happening in the maritime environment.
Currently existing maritime surveillance mechanisms are not aimed at identifying WMD-related trafficking. Further areas where we see shortcomings and need for improvement, is Maritime Cargo Control and Maritime Interdiction.

Latvia believes that modernization of maritime surveillance systems to enable effective detection of WMD-related trafficking at sea and an enhancement of sub-regional, regional and international cooperation, including the signing of bilateral and multilateral standing agreements on interdiction and boarding of vessels at sea, would strongly contribute to our shared commitment in countering WMD-related proliferation.

Efforts to address this issue are on-going. Allow me to mention the Proliferation Security Initiative. Around 100 states have endorsed the principles of this Initiative and we hope that the number will continue to rise.

Mr. Chairman, Latvia is dedicated to contribute to the continuous improvement of the ability to counter this contemporary threat of WMD-related proliferation. In March of this year, Latvia hosted an international event on Countering WMD Threats in the Maritime Environment, where participating states came up with many valuable thoughts on the way forward for improving the existing capabilities for WMD-related maritime counter proliferation.

Finally, let me use this opportunity to mention the issue of chemical weapons which were dumped in the Baltic Sea decades ago. They pose not only environmental, but also grave health, safety and security concerns. My country fully supports initiatives led by Lithuania in raising international awareness on this matter.

Thank you.