STATEMENT

BY

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IN THE

FIRST COMMITTEE

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AND
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS

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Mr. Chairman,

I thank you for giving me the floor. I congratulate you and other members of the bureau on your election. I assure you of my delegation’s full support. I wish to align myself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Iran and Nigeria on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement and Africa respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

As peace loving nations we “came together to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security”. However, our goal to make the world a safe and secure place - a place where human kind can live without fear of annihilation due to use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction, continues to elude us.

There are simply too many threats to the peace in existence today. Terrorism, inter and intra-state conflicts, are the order of the day. Illicit trafficking of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, poses a serious threat to world peace. Some countries possess nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The real issue that we have to tackle is how to move forward in pursuit of our ideal of increasing human security though general and complete disarmament without diminishing the security of any state.

Mr. Chairman,

For us in the developing world conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, are responsible for loss of people’s lives on a daily basis. The UN
Programme of Action to Combat the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA), and its International Tracing Instrument, are important global instruments with the potential to curb the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons as well as their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world. It is, however, common knowledge that implementation of the UNPoA has not been as successful as we had hoped.

The fact that the UNPoA is not legally binding presents a challenge in the implementation of the Programme. It is my delegation’s hope that this issue would be given serious attention during the upcoming Review Conference of the UNPoA in 2018. Moreover, lack of predictable funding for the implementation of the programme is another big impediment. As such, we call for increased international cooperation and funding from our development partners in implementing the Programme.

Mr. Chairman,

It was inspiring that after many years of negotiations, the international community resolved that it was time to regulate global trade in conventional weapons, by adopting the Arms Trade Treaty on 02 April this year. It is even more encouraging to note that more than 113 Member States have signed the Treaty since it was first opened for signature on 03 June, 2013. I am proud to announce that my country, Lesotho, is among such countries. We shall shortly embark on the path towards ratification of the instrument. We encourage others to consider joining the Treaty without any further delay, in order that it
may soon enter into force. It is our hope that the ATT will level the playing field for international arms transfers by requiring all States to abide by a set of standards for transfer controls.

Mr. Chairman,

We derive no comfort from the fact that some States possess weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in large quantities under the pretext of deterrence. The devastating humanitarian consequences of these weapons are known to all. History has revealed that the theory of deterrence is counterproductive. It only invites endless arms races and increases the threat of proliferation. Possession of Nuclear Weapons has proved not to be a source of security and stability. We, therefore, call on the Nuclear Weapon States to fulfill their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and not only renounce their nuclear arsenals, but destroy them in a verifiable manner. Equally important is the need for States outside the NPT to consider joining the Treaty as Non-Nuclear Weapon States.

It is undoubtedly, important; Mr. Chairman, that we focus our attention on strengthening the NPT, which is the cornerstone of the world’s nuclear non-proliferation disarmament regime. The three pillars of the NPT, namely disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy must be implemented in a balanced manner. Efforts to erode the credibility of the NPT must be thwarted. In this context, we are compelled to register our concern about lack of progress in establishing a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. The fact that a Conference on establishing this zone was not held last
year as mandated by the 2010 NPT Review Conference is a major setback. We appeal to the Co-Conveners to do all it takes to ensure that the Conference is held sooner. It must be remembered that the conference is not an end in itself; the objective is to ultimately establish a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone which will not only enhance regional security, but indeed the world security.

In the same token, we encourage the Nuclear Weapons States to ratify the Nuclear Weapons Free Zones Treaties and their relevant protocols and cooperate in bringing about the entry into force of the legally binding protocols of all such Nuclear Weapons Free Zones. In this regard, we hope that the ratification of the Pelindaba Treaty by the remaining Nuclear Weapon State will become a reality in the fullness of time. Needless to mention that Nuclear Weapons States are under a moral obligation to provide legally binding negative security assurances to the Non-Nuclear weapons states against the use of such weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

The agreement reached to eliminate Syria’s chemical weapons speaks to what the international community can achieve through effective diplomacy. We welcome Security Council Resolution 2118 on the framework for eliminating Syria’s chemical weapons. We are encouraged by Syria’s decision to agree to the total destruction of its chemical weapons and join the Chemical Weapons Convention. We can only hope that other countries that possess these weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, would renounce such weapons and join the consensus to have a safe and secure world.
A major lesson that we must learn from the use of chemical weapons in Syria is that there is no absolute guarantee that weapons of mass destruction may never be used, intentionally or accidentally, by states or non-state actors including terrorists. Let us build on the momentum generated by the High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament held on 26th September, 2013, and rid the world of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

The impasse within the UN Disarmament Machinery, in particular in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), distorts the whole purpose for which the UN was created. It is time that Members of the CD stop focusing on their narrow individual security interests and make progress on the issues before them. As the single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum the importance of the CD is beyond dispute.

Mr. Chairman,

All that needs to be said on disarmament and non-proliferation has been said already. Every year we reiterate our well known positions, both in this committee and elsewhere within the UN Disarmament Machinery on disarmament and non-proliferation. Yet, consensus is difficult to achieve and progress is slow in the implementation of the decisions we make. The time is now for translating our rhetoric into action. With the necessary political will, we can make meaningful progress.

I THANK YOU