Statement by

Ambassador Michael Biontino

During the informal exchange with Assistant Secretary-General Kim Won-soo, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Change Implementation, concerning the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Research, training and library services” (A/68/485)

Monday, October 21, 2013
Mr. Chairman,

We appreciate the UN-Secretariat’s change plan aiming at optimizing UN structures and increasing efficiencies and synergies.

Within the last months, the proposals concerning new structures for research, training and library services, have moved into the right direction. We see the benefits of streamlining training and library services.

However, regarding research institutes, we are not fully convinced that costs and benefits are balanced. What is the rationale for integrating the research institutes into the proposed new structure?

While implementing changes and rationalizing structures, we need to ensure that the fulfillment of mandates is not restricted. It is important to us that new organizational structures do not affect the independence of research activities. Will the independence of UNIDIR be fully preserved under the new structure?

We cannot see what benefit the proposed network will have for research institutions which have little substantial overlap. Will such new structures really have a streamlining effect, or merely introduce a new level of administration?

We also warn against introducing any structures that could be interpreted as allowing political control of research institution’s activities.

What is the Secretariat’s vision for future cooperation between MS and UNIDIR? We greatly value UNIDIR as an important, independent and credible source of knowledge. They do cutting-edge work, while ensuring that Member States’ Delegations in Geneva and New York have access to the often complex issues of arms control and disarmament.

It is essential that Member States can continue to pursue projects directly with research institutes, particularly UNIDIR. This is a key benefit of UN research institutes, and Member States’ voluntary funding largely depends on this direct cooperation.

The 5th Committee will have to take a close look on financial implications of this proposal. We have to safeguard the current funding structure.