Statement by

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at

UNGA68 First Committee

Thematic debate on other weapons of mass destruction

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Check against delivery
Mr. President,

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU. I wish to add the following comments in a national capacity.

This year has brought us a stark reminder of the direct relevance of the work done in this and other disarmament fora to the lives of individuals.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria is utterly reprehensible. The subsequent actions of the Syrian authorities to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention and to destroy its arsenal of chemical weapons are welcome. However, those responsible for the appalling loss of life must be brought to account. Ireland has called for the referral of war crimes in Syria to the International Criminal Court, and we reiterate that call now.

Syria must also continue to demonstrate its commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention by fully implementing all of its obligations and undertaking under the terms of Security Council Resolution 2118. The joint UN/OPCW mission in Syria has had a positive start, and destruction activities have already begun; Ireland urges all parties to maintain the positive attitude demonstrated so far and equally to do all they can to facilitate the mission as it takes its work forwards.

Ireland has already made a contribution of €200,000 to the trust fund established by the OPCW to support destruction activities in Syria, and we will examine what additional support we might be able to provide, either financial or in kind, when ongoing needs are fully determined.

Mr. President,

The CWC held its Third Review Conference in April this year. Its successful conclusion demonstrates the near-universal consensus against chemical weapons. With two accessions since that Conference, only six states are now not Party to the CWC; Ireland calls on them to ratify or accede to the Convention as quickly as possible.

The Review Conference also highlighted the need for states to ensure effective implementation of their obligations under the Convention. Only by ensuring that comprehensive implementation measures are in place can we be confident that neither states nor non-state actors can circumvent the global ban on chemical weapons.

Equally, all states must meet their commitments in relation to destruction and those states which have not been able to meet the deadlines for destruction established in the Convention must continue to work in accordance with the measures agreed by the sixteenth Meeting of States Parties and relevant arrangements with the OPCW.

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the OPCW is a welcome recognition of the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW in bringing us close to the complete elimination of chemical weapons. I reiterate our congratulations to the Director General of the OPCW and his predecessors and to all of the staff of the OPCW.
Mr. President,

Chemical weapons have for obvious reasons dominated much of the attention of the multilateral system this year, but of course we must also recall developments elsewhere.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention has continued to consider efforts to ensure that the threat of biological weapons never becomes a reality. The ongoing work to improve both the substance of transparency and confidence-building measures and the overall level of participation in those measures is important in this respect. Indeed, so also are efforts to improve the level of adherence to the BTWC, and the addition of five new States Parties in the past year is a very welcome development.

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 non-state actors, but also to implement obligations effectively under both the BTWC and the CWC.

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 135 other states. We encourage all states to adhere to this Code. We also believe that effective export controls must form part of efforts to prevent missile proliferation, and in this context the Missile Technology Control Regime has an important role to play.

Mr. President,

Developments this year have reminded us how important the removal of WMD from the world’s arsenals is. We have an opportunity now to pursue the goal of a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Ireland supports the tireless efforts of Ambassador Laajava of Finland to convene a conference on the establishment of that Zone and we call on all parties to participate.

The temptation to use WMD will exist as long as the weapons themselves exist; we must redouble our efforts to remove that temptation for good.

ENDS