Mr. Chairman,

I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations for your election, and assure you of our support and cooperation. My delegation associates itself with the statements of the Non-Aligned Movement delivered by Indonesia, the African Group delivered by Nigeria, and the Arab Group delivered by Bahrain.

Mr. Chairman,

The First Committee meets this year at an important juncture in global nuclear disarmament efforts, where the General Assembly has taken the lead by convening the first ever High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, on 26 September. The meeting demonstrated the global resolve to rid the world of nuclear weapons, and that the multilateral disarmament machinery must shoulder its responsibility in achieving this goal.

Egypt believes that we should invest in the momentum created by this High Level Meeting. We believe there should be a resolution tabled in this session of the First Committee, to follow up on its results. We support the draft resolution proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement, with the aim of mobilizing efforts both within the UN system, and on a wider scope, towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, through designating an international day for nuclear disarmament, inviting the Secretary General to produce a report containing the views of Member States on a nuclear weapons conventions in preparation for launching negotiations, and convening a summit on nuclear disarmament in 2018 to review progress.
We call on the whole UN membership to support these concrete and incremental measures, to reach our common goal of nuclear disarmament. We consider these steps to be a catalyst in support of the multilateral disarmament machinery. These steps are only preliminary, amongst a wider menu of options for further steps in the direction of concluding a Nuclear Weapons Convention, to ban the production, development, and possession of these weapons, and end their threat to humanity. The role and mandate of the General Assembly cannot be underestimated in this regard.

The High Level Meeting has reflected that international efforts related to the total elimination of nuclear weapons should be pursued through a ‘disarmament perspective’. That any international initiative in the field should have as its main focus the achievement of nuclear disarmament. This is applicable when we discuss a possible fissile material treaty. It should include past production of fissile material, and lead to a time-bound process for their elimination. This view is shared by many states that truly believe in nuclear disarmament. We hope that this be the focus of the Governmental Group of Experts that the Secretary General is mandated to form. Egypt stands ready to contribute to the related discussions.

Mr. Chairman,

Efforts towards global nuclear disarmament are further strengthened by the establishment of nuclear weapon free zones. Nowhere is that more important than in the Middle East, a fact that is evidenced by the annual consensus resolution of the General Assembly tabled by Egypt. This global consensus gained an operational dimension through the collective agreement of the 2010 Review Conference of Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to convene a conference in 2012 on the establishment a Zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The postponement of the 2012 Conference was cause of profound disappointment. It contradicts the collective agreement of 2010. Egypt calls for the convening of the Conference without delay, to implement the 2010 mandate and to achieve the long overdue objectives of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. We expect that this session of the First Committee will deliver the needed necessary measures through the two yearly resolutions presented by Egypt entitled ‘The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East’, and “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East”.

To achieve these goals, Egypt has engaged constructively in all fora. Minister Nabil Fahmy of Egypt launched an initiative on September 28th here at the General Assembly. It consists of:

First: inviting all countries of the Middle East, as well as the five permanent members of the Security Council, to deposit official letters to the Secretary General of the United Nations, stating their support for declaring the Middle East a region free from weapons of mass destruction.

Second: that the countries of the region that have not acceded to, any of the international conventions on weapons of mass destruction, should commit, before the end of this year, to simultaneously sign and ratify the relevant conventions. They should also deposit a proof of that to the Security Council.
Egypt invites all States of the region to respond positively to this initiative. We ask the Secretary General to coordinate the above steps to ensure their success. We will lend all possible resources and efforts to ensure the success the efforts of the Secretary General in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

This First Committee meeting is the first one after the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty by vote at the General Assembly. I take this opportunity to reiterate that Egypt is well aware of the effects of the illicit trafficking in weapons. We are fully committed to exert all efforts to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in arms. We urge all the countries that decide to accede to ATT, to implement it in good faith in order to achieve its purpose and goals. We will be following closely the developments regarding the accession to, entry into force and implementation of the Treaty in order to determine our final position.

The efforts of the international community should continue to fill in the remaining gaps. We continue to call for addressing the elements of over production and the ever increasing stockpiles of conventional weapons within major arms exporters and producers. We still believe that every effort must be exerted to bring production and stockpiles in major arms producing States under international scrutiny. International accountability is the only guarantee against the possible abuse of the existing imbalance between major arms producers and the rest of the world.

This imbalance is exacerbated by the advancement in conventional weapons. Egypt reiterates that technology should not overtake humanity. The potential or actual development of Lethal Autonomous Robots raises many questions on their compliance with international humanitarian law, as well as issues of warfare ethics. Such issues need to be fully addressed. Regulations should be put into place before such systems (LARs) are to be developed and/or deployed.

While such sophistication of weapons is an added challenge, the ever continuing threat posed by the illicit traffic in small and light arms is one that should be addressed adequately. Egypt has twice facilitated the review of the International Tracing Instrument as part of the Review Processes of the UN Program of Action of Small Arms and Light Weapons. We will put all our expertise to ensure the successful convening of the upcoming Biennial Meeting of States in June of 2014.

Mr. Chairman,

We trust that your able stewardship of the activities of the First Committee will lead us to progress further on a balanced agenda of disarmament and international security both on the fronts of weapons of mass destruction and conventional armaments. We reiterate our support to you in this regard, and stand ready to contribute our part.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.