Statement by Mr. Yasar Ammar, Third Secretary
Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN,
at the First Committee Thematic Debate
on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction
(69th Session of the UNGA)
(23 October 2014)

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement made by the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions continue to serve as key constituents of the international security architecture. Together, these Conventions have also strongly reinforced their roles as the international norm and a bulwark against the use of these weapons. Accordingly, these instruments have made an important contribution to the goal of general and complete disarmament.

These success stories reaffirm the vitality and value of treaties negotiated multilaterally on the basis of inclusiveness, good faith and equality, while taking into account the security interests of all states. It is this spirit of cooperative multilateralism that should guide the international community in navigating and addressing new and emerging challenges in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan shares the concerns that, along with the threat of the possible production, acquisition and use of chemical and biological weapons by States, the international community also faces the danger of the production, acquisition and use of such weapons by non-State actors. Realizing the full potential of the Convention for international peace and security necessitates early elimination of remaining stockpiles by possessor States. The deplorable use of chemical weapons in Syria highlights such concerns.

While advances in biology offer a range of new tools to address diseases, they have also heightened anxieties on the possibility of non-state actors misusing biological toxins, agents and related materials. Pakistan believes that the only credible and sustainable method of strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention is through multilateral negotiations aimed at concluding a non-discriminatory, legally binding agreement, including on verification provisions dealing with all the Articles of the Convention in a balanced and comprehensive manner.

Full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of these Conventions including export control measures, national physical protection and international assistance as well as capacity building are key tools to prevent non-state actors from acquiring, producing or using these weapons.
Mr. Chairman,

We are pleased to note that the Third Review Conference successfully rendered an outcome document which reviewed progress of last five years and provided guidance for future priorities. The decision by the Nobel Peace Committee to bestow year 2013’s Peace Prize on the OPCW is recognition of its efforts to eliminate chemical weapons from the world.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan fully supported the endorsement of OPCW’s Executive Council decision by the Security Council on chemical disarmament in Syria. The adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 helped pave the way forward including on the political track. Syria’s decision to become a party to the CWC and its cooperation with the OPCW are also positive developments.

Pakistan welcomes the milestones achieved in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons programme. Destruction of Syrian chemical weapons in such a short timeframe – and that too in the midst of an on-going conflict, was an outstanding success. We appreciate the efforts made by the by the OPCW, OPCW-UN Joint Mission and assisting state parties for their extraordinary efforts to make this task possible.

Pakistan has repeatedly condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria and the killing of so many innocent Syrians, as it remains opposed to the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances. We find it reprehensible and completely contrary to the legal norms and standards of international community. We commend the role played by OPCW’s Fact Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria to investigate into the use of chlorine gas. We also support the DG OPCW’s decision to continue the FFM and urge all concerned parties to facilitate the mission.

With the accession of Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW membership has grown to 190 which are its State parties. However, the goals of the Convention can only be fully realized when the Convention attains universality. We, therefore, once again, call upon the States not Party to the Convention to accede to it without further delay and precondition.

The provisions of the Convention relating to International Cooperation and Assistance are essential to keep a large number of States without chemical industry engaged with the work of the OPCW. Cooperation in the field of assistance and protection provides a platform to a large number of developing countries to improve their capacities against use or threat of use of Chemical Weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the years, Pakistan has interacted closely with and extended full cooperation to the OPCW on a range of activities. In active collaboration with the Technical Secretariat, we have hosted several regional and international capacity building courses in Pakistan. A sub-regional Assistance and Protection Center has been established in Pakistan to serve as center of
excellence for countries in the region. Pakistan is also one of the first countries to support the National Authority Mentorship Programme and is closely sharing with another State Party our national experience in implementing the CWC.

Pakistan continues to believe that sensitive technologies and materials must be adequately controlled to ensure their use for peaceful purposes alone. However, this objective cannot justify practices and cartels which hinder legitimate trade in chemicals, equipment and technology among States Parties for demonstrably peaceful purposes. It is vital to restore balance and even-handedness in the implementation of the Convention.

With regard to future priorities of the OPCW, the original intent reflected in the Convention must be adhered to. The Convention establishes a hierarchy of threats that different types of chemicals and related facilities pose to the object and purpose of the Convention. Pakistan stresses the need for advancing the goals of the CWC in a comprehensive, balanced and non-discriminatory manner.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan ratified the BTWC in 1974 as a non-possessor State and remains fully committed to implementing all provisions of the Convention. We have instituted comprehensive legislative, regulatory and administrative measures to regulate life sciences in Pakistan and to strengthen our export control systems on biological agents and toxins, bringing them at par with best international standards.

Pakistan attaches special importance to the decision of the Seventh Review Conference to include cooperation and assistance as one of the standing agenda items, with a particular focus on strengthening Article X implementation. We are hopeful that together we will be able to find practical ways to fully implement Article X of the Convention.

We note with concern that there continue to exist undue restrictions and challenges for the full and effective implementation of Article X. Pakistan firmly believes that the dual-use nature of emerging technologies in itself should not be used as a pretext for proscribing or restricting their availability to developing countries for peaceful purposes, which are duly permitted during the Convention.

Pakistan views the CBMs as a tool for increasing transparency and building trust and confidence among States Parties in the implementation of the Convention. The CBMs cannot however be a tool for assessing compliance by the States Parties, for which the only method is a legally binding mechanism with verification provisions.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan welcomes the discussion on developments in science and technology related to the Convention as part of a standing agenda item, mandated by Article XII of the Convention.
The developing countries are faced with distinct challenges and requirements in respect of improving their public health care systems and building their capacity to diagnose and treat diseases. In this regard, developing countries could benefit from advances in technologies that make vaccine and drug production simpler, faster cheaper and more efficient.

Pakistan believes in the need for improving capacity of developing States Parties, to strengthen their existing institutions through cooperation and assistance from the developed States and other relevant international and regional organizations in terms of materials, equipment, financial resources, technology and human resource development. This would better equip them for detecting, reporting and responding to outbreaks of infectious diseases, biological weapons attacks or other challenges that may arise in the context of the BTWC, including their preparedness, response, crisis management and mitigation capabilities.

Pakistan also welcomes the decision of the Seventh Review Conference to include the biennial agenda item, for discussion in 2014 and 2015 on: “How to strengthen implementation of Article VII, including consideration of detailed procedures and mechanisms for the provision of assistance and cooperation by the States Parties.”

In this regard, Pakistan recalls the final declaration on Article VII, of the Seventh Review Conference, which clearly states the responsibility of all States Parties to the Convention for provision of timely and effective assistance, irrespective of whether the disease outbreak has occurred naturally or has been deliberately caused, and that such timely and effective assistance should also cover diseases and toxins that may harm humans, animals, plants or the environment.

The absence of a dedicated verification mechanism for Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention, to ensure compliance with the Convention, is a source of concern for Pakistan. We would like to note that the Secretary General’s mechanism is only an operational tool for investigation after an actual “use” if a biological and toxin weapons has occurred. The Secretary General’s mechanism, however, does not substitute the need for a dedicated verification mechanism for the Convention which would ensure that biological and toxin weapons are never developed, produced, stockpiled or otherwise acquired or retained, thereby precluding their use by the States Parties.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.