Statement by

H.E. Susanne Rumohr Hækkerup,

Ambassador for Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

1st Committee, General Debate

New York, 8 October 2014

Check against delivery

E-mail: nyemis@un.dk
Thank you, Chairman, and congratulations for the efficient work by you and the bureau which we wholly support.

Aligning ourselves fully with the statement by the European Union, I would like to draw your attention to some points of specific interest to Denmark, but before turning to them let me pose a challenging question to all of you:

As this First committee is gathering again, we must ask: Have we moved the agenda forward? Have we done enough to decrease human suffering? Is the world a safer place due to our collective efforts?

The answer is not a simple one, but sometimes you can see a pattern, if you look for it at a distance. And if we look at the work of the international community for the last years, struggling to achieve progress in disarmament, you can see a clear pattern: When we unite and truly seek compromises we all succeed. When we are divided, we all fail.

Others have highlighted the tremendous and very positive support for the Arms Trade Treaty, and it is singularly significant that the treaty will enter into force by 24 December 2014. This is a very important and encouraging achievement, but this is not the end - only the beginning. We need to work on the implementation of the treaty; work on the question of how to regulate transport between third countries; and work on how to not only increase the number of state parties but also convince major arms sellers to sign, ratify, and implement the treaty. We cannot be complacent as uncontrolled and illegal trade in arms remains a critical factor in destabilizing countries and whole regions and is at the root of intolerable human suffering. For not least already fragile countries such trade brings additional insecurity, suffering, and chaos. The tragic developments in East Ukraine, in Syria and in Iraq have increased the threat of a further spreading of Small Arms and Light Weapons and underline the need for control.

Even a fully implemented ATT will not solve all problems or regulate all aspects of the global supply chain of the arms trade. The issue of arms transport between third countries remains largely unregulated at the international level. With almost 10 percent of all maritime shipping worldwide, Denmark is one of the leading shipping nations. We are very proud of this, but it also entails a special responsibility.

We need to figure out how to create incentives, guidelines, norms, and standards that would induce companies to do the right thing. It is critical to ensure a level playing field not putting companies doing the right thing in disadvantage through unfair competition. It is a daunting task, but this should not discourage us from setting out to solve it, step by step.
Denmark looks keenly forward to the Conference of State Parties to the ATT to be held next year and thanks all involved in the preparations for their diligent work to ensure that the ATT will evolve into a model for effective, pragmatic and ever closer international cooperation.

In my part of the world, more people die from multi-drug resistant bacteria than from traffic accidents. Infectious diseases, whether naturally occurring, in the form of accidents, or caused by an intentional release are some of the greatest threats that the world faces today. The recent events in relation to Ebola in West Africa only serve to increase our awareness that diseases continue to be a global challenge, requiring close cooperation between all nations.

Denmark is strongly engaged in the field of biosecurity and has been so for a number of years. We have implemented a stringent system for issuing licenses to biotechnology companies and research institutions in order to minimize the risk of biological agents falling into the wrong hands, or dual use technology being abused for sinister purposes. Our aim is to balance this focus on security with the needs of the biotech community. While biotechnology has the potential to do great harm if used by terrorist organizations it also has a decisively important potential to improve the world we all inhabit. Without biotechnology we stand no chance of improving the overall health status of the human population and we will be defenseless against the naturally occurring outbreaks of infectious diseases. Therefore, biosecurity and biosafety measures must never stand in the way of legitimate research and development in the life sciences.

We have a close cooperation with Kenya, and we aim to use our experiences to reach out to other countries in order to identify possible biosecurity and biosafety gaps and provide efficient solutions that strengthen international security and health.

It is widely recognized that sexual and gender-based violence carries responsibility for an unacceptably high share of human suffering in this world, not least of the suffering caused by illicit and unregulated arms trade.

Hence, we will gain by fully realizing the importance of women’s political, social and economic empowerment and of gender equality while emphasizing the important role that women can play in civil society and as formal and informal community leaders in the prevention and reduction of armed violence and armed conflict, and in promoting disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Based on the overall strategy and mainstreaming approach on gender equality in Danish Development Cooperation, women’s rights and empowerment as well as gender awareness form an integral part of Danish assistance programmes related to disarmament and arms control, including in the revised Mine Action Strategy adopted in 2006 and still in force.

These affirmative and perceptive norms already established by the international community should in our view be better reflected in future UNGA resolutions on Women, Disarmament, Non-proliferation and Arms Control and mainstreaming of gender awareness should form part of all the endeavours of the First Committee. None of us are from Mars – or from any other planet – we share this one world and we are obliged to use all powerful resources to improve it.

2014 has also seen important progress in some areas of non-proliferation and reduction of the global threat from WMDs. The OPCW and the UN played crucial roles in the international community’s efforts to identify and destroy the declared stockpile of chemical weapons from the Syrian Arab Republic. Thanks to an unprecedented coordinated effort by a number of
countries we were able to take a decisive step towards fully eliminating the Syrian chemical weapons arsenal and production facilities – providing an essential contribution to global security and disarmament. Denmark played a key role in these efforts by coordinating and providing vessels for the maritime operation in charge of transporting the most dangerous chemical weapons from Syria for neutralization and destruction abroad. We obviously expect the Syrian Arab Republic – as well as all other parties to the CWC – to fully comply with its international obligations. In this context we are deeply disturbed by recent reports about the continuing use of chemical agents such as chlorine as weapons to target civilians in Syria, and we fully support the efforts of the OPCW and others to shed light on the factual circumstances surrounding these reports. There are strong indications of who is behind these blatant violations of the Convention and those responsible for the use of WMDs must be held accountable.

The importance for international peace and security of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and safe and secure peaceful uses of nuclear energy cannot be overestimated. We should never lose sight of the catastrophic and unacceptable humanitarian consequences should nuclear weapons ever be used. This issue will be discussed at the conference organized in Vienna by Austria in 2 months’ time.

Unfortunately, we are short of progress in nuclear disarmament, although positive steps are also seen. Denmark acknowledges the considerable progress achieved in reducing deployed warheads and stockpiles, and we particularly welcome the New START Treaty. But we share this planet with more than 16,000 nuclear warheads, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has not yet entered into force. I am sure you will agree that this is not enhancing global security. Instead, we must build confidence and trust. By pursuing a building block approach with parallel and simultaneous steps we can and must move forward. With confidence in ourselves and in the international community. With trust in our partners and in our goals. This will gradually shape and bond the building blocks for a multilateral framework ensuring general and complete nuclear disarmament, as expressly desired in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This vision none of us should ever lose sight of. Trust and confidence may have further regressed in this past year but that should only induce us to work even harder, and Denmark looks forward to contributing to the NPT review conference next year.

We are encouraged by the reporting from the IAEA that Teheran is complying with aspects of the Joint Plan for Action and the Framework for Cooperation between Iran and the Agency. But it is premature to rejoice before we have achieved a comprehensive, long-term settlement, restoring international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear program and the absence of any military dimensions.

We are deeply concerned that the DPRK continues down its dangerous and irrational path of ballistic missile launches, nuclear tests, uranium enrichment and construction of a Light Water Reactor in flagrant violation of its international obligations and urge all involved to work harder for a peaceful solution. Now.

Chairman, let me revert to the question I posed in the beginning of my intervention and sum up some elements to answer it:

Yes, we have moved the agenda forward and yes we have addressed some of the root causes leading to human suffering. BUT the answer is, unfortunately, also no: the world is not necessarily a safer place. New developments have created new and increased challenges. This is exactly why we need to seek compromises and unite – if not, we will all fail.

Thank you for your attention.