Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union, we would like to highlight some issues to which Estonia attaches particular importance at this year's session of the First Committee.

We live in a world with a multitude of conflicts and tensions. Some are emerging, others are raging or frozen, but all are more complicated than ever in the context of the security challenges. What we have seen over the past years in Syria and Libya, and especially in the conflict in Ukraine – which is the clearest example of hybrid warfare waged against a sovereign state – is a reminder that we should all be alert. No society is completely immune to hybrid threats. Hybrid threats, cyber security, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists pose a pressing need on the international community to respond with increasing resolve. We therefore must make progress towards universalisation, effective implementation and strengthening of existing international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation instruments and regimes.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains a very serious threat. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the repeated nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches conducted by the DPRK and the ongoing activity to further develop its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes. We strongly urge the DPRK to change its course and come back to compliance with its international obligations.

We also condemn in the strongest possible terms all use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. We are gravely concerned about the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria, which has been confirmed by the OPCW’s Fact Finding Mission. Should chemical weapons be used by state or non-state actors, accountability for these horrendous attacks must follow. The Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) is vital for identifying those responsible, that is why we strongly believe that JIM’s mandate should immediately be renewed and the UN SC has a
special responsibility in this regard. We expect a strong resolution of the First Committee on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Mr Chairman, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains the true cornerstone of the global efforts to pursue nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy. Estonia shares the ultimate goal of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, a world without nuclear weapons, and continues to support the “progressive approach” towards nuclear disarmament to be pursued in a pragmatic and responsible way. To this end, Estonia supported both the 2016 UN General Assembly resolutions on the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) and on nuclear disarmament verification. Estonia is actively participating in the work of the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group, and it is our hope that this process will bring us yet another step closer to the commencement of the official negotiations. We support the notion that the FMCT should be legally binding, non-discriminatory, multilateral, and internationally and effectively verifiable, but we also believe that it should be seen in the broader context of the non-proliferation regime serving to reinforce the existing landscape.

Mr Chairman, Estonia remains deeply concerned by the long-standing deadlock of the Conference on Disarmament. The CD’s agenda encompasses global concerns and we believe that those concerns should be negotiated on a non-discriminatory, transparent and multilateral basis, with a wider participation of interested states. I would like to reiterate Estonia’s request to participate fully and equally in the disarmament discussions as a full member of the CD.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a vital multilateral instrument for international disarmament and non-proliferation, and we therefore deeply regret that the Treaty still has not entered into force. We urge all States, particularly those whose adherence is required for the CTBT to enter into force, to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay.

Mr Chairman, Estonia is pleased to see the advancement of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) goals, as shown by the outcome of the Third Conference of States Parties in Geneva. Aimed as a robust instrument to curb globally illicit and illegal transfers of conventional arms to conflict zones or parties of armed conflict, the work on effective implementation has to continue. ATT should not waver in pursuing universalisation and promoting transparency and cooperation. The effective implementation of the Treaty is itself a step in broader confidence-building. Contributing through the EU outreach programs and sharing individual expertise and know-how in arms and export control, Estonia remains a committed Party in advancing the ATT goals.
Estonia supports the efforts to universalise and strengthen the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Although the meetings of experts were not possible due to financial reasons, it is important that the upcoming conferences are substantial. As president-designate of Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, Estonia considers it important that the momentum on promoting and implementing the protocol is maintained. Work on strengthening national reporting should continue. In this regard, we look forward to discussing the proposal on provision of experts’ assistance for national reporting on Protocol V. On a more general note, Estonia is concerned about the financial troubles of the different Geneva-based disarmament conventions and calls on all UN states to honour their financial responsibilities to ensure that those Conventions can operate in an effective manner.

Estonia recognises that the security in the cyber world has become a very important issue in the context of wider international security. The role and involvement of the UN and in particular, the First Committee is therefore becoming increasingly relevant. It is regrettable that the GGE did not achieve a consensus report in 2017 and could not make any further progress. It is our view that, all in all, the GGE has been a productive format of work. Over the years, the GGEs have reached consensus on a number of recommendations, which the General Assembly has repeatedly endorsed. It is our task as States to fully implement these recommendations. Estonia fully supports the establishment of a strategic framework for conflict prevention and stability in cyberspace that is based on international law, in particular the UN Charter, the development and implementation of universal norms of responsible state behaviour and regional confidence-building measures. We need to continue our efforts to increase transparency and build confidence in cyber space.

My country is also determined to support humanitarian demining and mine action; we increased our contributions over the past few years and we continue to do so. This includes financial support to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), as well as to the clean-up of various explosive remnants of war and mine clearance activities under several bilateral and international humanitarian projects. We also urge all States who have not done so to join the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty.

Mr Chairman, amidst current conflicts and crises, it is also important to ensure that women and children do not fall victim to gender-based violence and are included in conflict resolution and peace negotiations. Therefore, it is paramount to continue to implement UN SC resolution 1325 and related resolutions on women, peace and security.
Finally, Mr Chairman, we are determined to contribute to the efforts of the international community to strengthen the implementation of existing disarmament and arms control instruments. We also wish to offer our know-how on inclusive development to the global discussion table. Estonia is aspiring to become elected member of the UN Security Council for the period of 2020-21. Running for the Security Council demonstrates Estonia’s long-term commitment to take more responsibility in the globalised world and also offer a small state’s perspective to the Council.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.