



**General Assembly  
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**First Committee  
General Debate**

**Mr. Steffen Kongstad  
Director General**

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Mr Chair,

Let me join previous speakers in congratulating you and the Bureau for assuming leadership of this Committee.

Two weeks ago, the UN Security Council Summit unanimously adopted resolution 1887, sending a strong message that the proliferation of nuclear weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security, and that the safest course of action is to abolish them. Indeed, this year's session of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly takes place at a time when we are seeing historic opportunities for pursuing the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Our immediate challenge is to ensure that the upcoming Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) produces a tangible, substantive and forward-looking outcome.

Norway expects the Review Conference to stake out a clear path towards irreversible and unequivocal elimination of nuclear arms. The NPT must agree on specific steps to close any loopholes in the nuclear non-proliferation and security regimes. The NPT must pave the way for peaceful use of nuclear applications, which will be important for reaching the UN Millennium Development Goals. And the NPT must agree on a review process that holds us all accountable for fulfilling our legal obligations and commitments.

Such an outcome is not guaranteed, however, and a firm, determined and cooperative effort is required by all states parties to the NPT. If not, we run the risk of the NPT compact gradually dissolving.

(Check against delivery)



There can be no doubt that nuclear weapons are the most inhuman and indiscriminate weapons ever created. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are essential from a humanitarian perspective.

Indeed, there are important lessons to be learned from achievements in the field of humanitarian disarmament. The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and the Mine Ban Convention have demonstrated that it is possible to make a real difference to human security by breaking old habits. By mobilising political will, working across traditional groups, and in partnership with survivors and relevant stakeholders, we have adopted new international humanitarian law and disarmament instruments. We can all support this work by participating at the highest level at the Mine Ban Convention's second review conference in Colombia later this year.

The CCM was opened for signature in Oslo last year. Today 100 states have signed the convention and already 21 countries have ratified it. We urge all states to ratify or accede to the CCM as soon as possible. The First Meeting of States Parties to the CCM will take place in Vientiane next year. We warmly welcome the offer of the Lao PDR to host this important event. The CCM has set an international norm promising that cluster munitions are not to be used again. Against this background, we seriously doubt the utility of continued deliberations on cluster munitions in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), and whether this could attract consensus. We should rather have an in-depth discussion on where the CCW in the future possibly could provide any added value.

Armed violence leads to violations of human rights and hinders development. Norway believes that in order to be successful, the Arms Trade Treaty(ATT) would have to bring about real improvements for both individuals and societies. According to UN reports, there has been a nearly 30% increase in global weapons transfers. The devastating impact of armed violence affects many states and societies, but this is an unequally shared burden. The countries that are most affected from armed violence are paying the highest price, not only in terms of human suffering, but also in purely socioeconomic terms, through loss of human and other resources, increased health care costs, and lack of security. An effective ATT would, therefore, be one sound investment in prosperity and development.

We believe that the successful conclusion of an ATT will depend on the active participation of civil society, UN *field* organisations and the ICRC.

The UN Programme of Action (PoA) on combating illicit trade in small arms is another example of an intergovernmental process that has not lived up to any humanitarian expectations. The current PoA was a compromise reached in 2001. Since then millions of civilians have been killed or wounded by small arms. Efforts to reach legally binding instruments to further strengthen the PoA have so far not succeeded. It is therefore high time to take a more than critical look at whether the present PoA provides the best framework to address the humanitarian and developmental challenges posed by small arms.

Again, Norway believes that advancement in the field of disarmament and arms control can only be achieved if states listen to, learn from and include strong voices from civil society that advocate change. Such advocates for change must include field-based organisations, women's organisations and representatives of the people affected by the continued stalemate over these issues. As states, we need to look at how and with whom we conduct our work.

This brings me to my last point Mr Chair,

The structure of the present intergovernmental machinery in the field of disarmament was set up in 1978. The world has changed profoundly since then. Today it is becoming even more apparent that institutions like the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) are not delivering. They are simply dysfunctional.

The CD has been paralysed for more than 10 years. Even after the adoption of its programme of work, it was unable to start the much needed negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT). It is also a paradox that the CD is tasked to negotiate global, legally binding treaties, while more than 120 UN member states are excluded from membership in the Conference. We need to look into the working methods of the CD to ensure that it is truly inclusive, and that no country can single-handedly bring it to a standstill.

The state of affairs in the UNDC is even worse. This body was intended to be a deliberative forum, but the fact is that very few experts from capitals bother to attend the UNDC regular sessions.

Norway has for several years advocated for improving the working methods of the First Committee in order to make it more relevant in addressing current and new security challenges. If we fail, we will continue to see that other bodies, like the UN Security Council, assume responsibility for matters related to disarmament and non-proliferation. While there have been some steps in the right direction, much more remains to be done.

Against this background, we see the wisdom of convening a Fourth Session on Disarmament under the UN General Assembly (SSOD IV), provided that we can agree on adjusting our multilateral deliberative and negotiating bodies to better respond to the window of opportunities which is now emerging.

The active participation of civil society and non-governmental organisations is crucial in order to raise awareness and provide substantial contributions to the discussions. Their expertise and experience are much needed in our quest to develop new instruments in the field of disarmament.

To conclude, the historic opportunity we have this year to make real progress is heartening, and it should be grasped. Let this year's First Committee mark the beginning of a new and much more productive phase in multilateral diplomacy, to the benefit of us all.

