STATEMENT BY

H.E. MR. GERARD CORR
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRELAND

TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

Geneva, 22 January 2013
Mr. President,

As this is the first time my delegation takes the floor, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you on the assumption of your role as President. My delegation would like to express its appreciation for the work you have already undertaken since assuming office, including the adoption of our agenda for 2013 already this morning, and assure you of our cooperation.

Mr. President,

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. President,

Since this Conference last met, there have been a number of developments which reveal growing impatience that we have failed to take forward our work since 1996.

In November, the General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted two resolutions which resolved to commence discussions on topics which we have declined to take forward. It also resolved to convene a High Level Meeting on nuclear disarmament later in the year. We must view these resolutions not only as a sign of the importance with which the international community views our agenda, but also as an indication that time will not stand still forever for the Conference on Disarmament.

Ireland supported all three resolutions. We believe they will contribute to global disarmament efforts and will assist this Conference to get back to work. We also believe this Conference has a vital contribution to make in achieving progress on disarmament.

Mr. President,

Last week, in a speech at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, the UN Secretary General said that “another year of stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament is simply unacceptable.”

This Conference therefore is faced with a simple choice. We can find the political will to address the very full disarmament agenda before us, or we can sit by while the international community moves on without us. I hope we will choose the former and that, in September, we will be able to report progress for the first time in many years. Our task here, the reason why we are here, is to make progress in the field of multilateral disarmament. The patience of the international community has a limit at our paralysis and abdication of responsibility.

Mr. President,
Later this spring, States Party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will gather here in Geneva for the second Preparatory Committee meeting of the 2015 NPT review cycle. As in this Conference, Ireland strongly believes the NPT continues to have a crucial role to play. It has stemmed the threat of wholesale nuclear proliferation. But progress on disarmament has been too slow. The continuing lack of progress on this pillar of the NPT will, in our view, undermine the Treaty’s non-proliferation objectives unless action is taken now. For this reason, my delegation will be joining those pressing for a greater focus on disarmament as this review cycle progresses.

Ireland remains strongly supportive of efforts to achieve a zone free of nuclear weapons as well as of other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. While we regret that it was not possible to convene a conference in Helsinki within 2012, as intended, we urge all those involved to remain engaged in this vital process so that the conference can be convened as early as possible this year. We support the work of the facilitator and the co-conveners to advance the goal of a conference. In this regard, we welcome the facilitator’s decision to hold multilateral consultations preparatory to the conference and hope that all concerned will engage constructively in these discussions.

Mr. President,

Ireland welcomes Norway’s initiative to host a conference in Oslo in early March on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, which will help to highlight the devastating consequences of any use of these weapons. This will serve to remind the world – and, perhaps just as importantly, to remind us – why working toward a world free of this threat remains an imperative.

My delegation looks forward to participating in the Open Ended Working Group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations which was established by the General Assembly. This Resolution, and the overwhelming majority by which it was adopted, are further clear signs of the need for and expectations of progress on nuclear disarmament negotiations.

We also look forward to the High Level Meeting of the General Assembly in September. We believe this will provide an opportunity for States to review progress to date and to reaffirm, at the highest level, their commitment to complete nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President,

In April, the States Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention will gather in The Hague for the third Review Conference. Since its entry into force in 1997, the CWC has made considerable progress towards eliminating, in a verifiable manner, an entire weapons category from global arsenals. It enjoys near universal adherence. While there is never room for complacency with regard to WMD, this must be seen as a significant success story of the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference has shown itself capable of notable achievements. It is late in the day, but with political will and constructive engagement by all, it can – and must – do so again.

Thank you