STATEMENT

by

His Excellency
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Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs
of the Slovak Republic

to the Conference on Disarmament

Geneva
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Madam President,

May I start by congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference and by wishing you all the success in your endeavors in steering this body. My delegation is looking forward to your leadership. I assure you of Slovakia’s support during your presidency.

Allow me also to thank your predecessor, Ambassador András Dékany of Hungary, for his tireless effort he invested in trying to begin a substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament.

Madam President,

Let me begin by recent developments that undermine our collective security and create another setback to our shared desire and common endeavor to maintain peace and security and to advance global disarmament and non-proliferation goals.

On 12th February North Korea conducted its third nuclear test that constitutes a great threat to the international peace and security. We categorically reject and protest against such irresponsible and provocative acts, which are in a violation of DPRK’s international obligations. The Slovak Republic urges the DPRK to stop immediately its provocations and to refrain from any action that can escalate tensions in the Korean Peninsula and undermine diplomatic efforts searching for peaceful solutions in the region. We call upon North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapon and missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, cease all related activities and to comply with all its international obligations, including UN Security Council Resolutions.

Madam President,

Under these circumstances, it is rather astonishing that while international security is jeopardized and the international community is facing a great threat and flagrant violations of international law, including the nonproliferation regime, we are debating whether we should start negotiations on pressing issues on disarmament and nonproliferation.

We regret that the Conference on Disarmament once again failed to meet its obligation to establish a Programme of Work thus failing to respond to numerous demands of the international community, including the UN Secretary-General who recently urged us “to revive substantive negotiations without delay”. Given its mandate and role, the Conference on Disarmament cannot neglect calls of the UN General Assembly and must take its recommendations into account while establishing a Programme of Work.

We are disappointed that individual ambitions prevail over global security interests thus preventing the international community from advancing on issues that would strengthen security for all.
Ongoing stalemate in the Conference and stagnation in strengthening and moving forward norms on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation endangers global security environment and especially the disarmament landscape. A machinery that is not able to secure and strengthen the environment risks changes in the landscape. We must prevent such erosion. In order to protect the environment, we must change our attitude and the protection mode.

Clearly, the continued impasse is unsustainable.

Madam President,

My country is fully committed to creating a safer world for all of us. Disarmament, and in particular nuclear disarmament, is an important tool that can get us closer to this goal.

Slovakia traditionally places the principle of multilateralism in the center of the international community's endeavor to find common and united solutions to global issues, including nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

We continue to see the Conference on Disarmament as a single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament matters. And we believe that it is so important that we cannot afford its further inactivity and its deadlock to continue. It has serious consequences for the Conference in terms of its credibility and relevance to address all current security needs.

It is the Member States of this Conference who bear a special responsibility and must not add to preserving the status quo. We must take the lead. And others will follow. If not, others will act. If a critical mass can be collected and engaged, alternative ways and means might be explored.

We cannot overlook aspirations to open other disarmament avenues and take multilateral disarmament negotiations forward. Last year the UN General Assembly adopted two resolutions establishing an open-ended working group, which will begin this year "to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations", and a group of governmental experts, which will commence its work next year on recommendations on possible aspects of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

My country supported these two resolutions with an aim to create a new momentum and to provide additional impetus to existing disarmament mechanisms and facilitate the Conference on Disarmament to begin its substantive work on these issues.

We are convinced that this Conference is still the best place to produce global, well-founded and viable instruments. The concept of the Conference offers a potential to find negotiated global solutions.
We believe that this body is central to disarmament negotiations and rather a key element of the whole disarmament machinery. We cannot afford to leave this body to sink only due to our inaction.

Madam President,

We understand that there are different priorities for the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. But the fact that the Conference is in a stalemate not due to its failure in negotiations but due to its inability to agree on the Programme of Work on which negotiations should proceed is a matter of serious concern.

In order to overcome existing differences and to end current impasse, we need to show increased flexibility, which would be reflected in trust and confidence in the global environment and developments therein and would help us to bridge our views. We can make progress if we work through engagement rather than enforcement, in an inclusive rather than selective process.

Madam President,

Slovakia continues to support immediate commencement of the negotiation on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, which would be part of the architecture of a nuclear weapon free world. We believe that such a treaty would be well placed in a comprehensive framework of mutually reinforcing instruments.

We share views that such a treaty would offer a unique opportunity to create a non-discriminatory regime with equal obligations for both nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states. It would enable us to strengthen further our common efforts to prevent such material being used for production of nuclear weapons or falling into hands of groups linked to terrorism.

We should work towards maximizing the non-proliferation and disarmament value of such an instrument.

Madam President,

Global security has undoubtedly been affected by poorly regulated trade in conventional arms. That is why Slovakia has been a strong supporter of the UN process aimed at concluding the Arms Trade Treaty, an instrument for regulating the international legal trade in conventional arms, while combating the illicit trafficking.

We regret that despite the great efforts of all involved we were not able to reach a consensus and to adopt the Treaty at the UN Diplomatic Conference in July 2012.
Nevertheless, we are convinced that there is a common determination to change the situation in this area and that we can turn our commitments into an action.

In this regard, we recognize that a substantial progress towards a final agreement has been made. We believe that we can and must complete our business and seek a solution, which would bring us to the adoption of the Treaty. Slovakia remains fully committed to securing a meaningful and effective, legally binding international Arms Trade Treaty. We believe that with sufficient political will we can find a consensus and reach an outcome acceptable to all.

From the perspective of making things doable, we regard the ATT process as a positive example of arms control and disarmament negotiations in the UN framework.

In conclusion, Madam President, let me reaffirm the readiness of my delegation to work with all partners with a view to bring a deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament to an end and take multilateral disarmament negotiations forward.

I thank you Madam President.