Statement by
H. E. Ambassador José Moraes Cabral,
Permanent Representative of Portugal
to the United Nations

General Debate of the First Committee of the
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Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Let me first congratulate you for taking the important task of chairing this Committee. Please accept on behalf of my delegation the assurances of our full support for your work and our wishes for a successful outcome.

As we convene here today, we hope that the result of our work can be positively influenced by the progress we have been witnessing for the past couple of years in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Such is the case of the results achieved at the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, where we took important steps towards a safer world. We have also witnessed recently the entry into force of the New START treaty, renewing the momentum for the disarmament goals we all share. On the conventional weapons side, tangible progress towards an Arms Trade Treaty has been made, increasing the prospects of a Diplomatic Conference for its adoption next year.

However, much remains to be done. The impasse of the Conference on Disarmament, which lasts for more than a decade, reminds us of the need to move faster in areas such as the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. Negotiations of such treaty must start at once, while a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons by all concerned States needs to be immediately upheld. Serious consideration should also be given to all the other core issues.
Mr Chairman,

Twelve years have gone by since the last review of the CD’s membership and no further action has since been taken.

The Conference needs to become more open and more inclusive. More countries should be able to join in, making the CD truly representative of the world we live in.

Thus, our call for the CD, at its next session, to initiate consideration of the review of its membership, by appointing a Special Rapporteur to examine the enlargement modalities without any prejudice to the outcome.

Mr Chairman,

Trust and confidence are at the very core of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty. The right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy rests on this premise.

In this regard we are deeply concerned by the lack of assurances from Iran on the civilian nature of its nuclear programme. We urge Iran to engage without pre-conditions with the international community in the negotiation of a solution that gives credible and internationally verifiable assurances on the peaceful purpose of its programme.
The non-compliance by Syria with its Safeguards agreement is yet another cause for concern. We urge Syria to cooperate with the IAEA in a fully transparent and cooperative way.

We are equally concerned by the latest developments in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear programme. We call on the DPRK to abide by its international obligations, namely to return to full compliance with the NPT and IAEA safeguards obligations.

Portugal, along with its European partners, is committed to the efforts that are currently being taken in various international fora in order to create a Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction Free-Zone in the Middle East, which we see as an important step towards peace and stability in the region and beyond. In this regard, we look forward to the IAEA Forum next month, as well as to the UN Conference in 2012 on the establishment of such a Zone.

Mr Chairman,

Fifteen years have passed since the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Regrettably, the Treaty has not yet entered into force. Nevertheless, we welcome the commitment by some Annex II States to its ratification and we call on all States that have not done so, to ratify the Treaty at an early date. It is essential that this important Treaty remains high up on the world's disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.
We are fast approaching the 7th Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons. In this Conference, we should endeavour to tackle issues such as universalization of the Convention and the strengthening of some of its provisions, namely those related to confidence building measures and to build confidence in compliance. We note that this Convention remains the only convention on weapons of mass destruction that still lacks a verification mechanism. We hope this situation can be changed, so we can reduce and eventually eliminate the serious threat that these weapons pose.

Mr. Chairman,

We have outlined some of the key issues that in our opinion delay the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation. We hope that the work of this session of the First Committee can give a tangible contribution for real progress towards those goals, thus increasing international security and stability.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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