Statement

by

H.E. Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz
Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York

before

The First Committee
(General Debate)

New York, 5 October, 2011
Please check against delivery
Mr. Chairman,

I would like to congratulate you on your election to chair the First Committee, and to express our confidence in your leadership of its work and assure you of our full support. My delegation would like also to associate with the statements of the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Group and the New Agenda Coalition.

Our meeting today offers a timely opportunity to take stock of the achievements we realized, and to identify the tasks that remain ahead. This is particularly important at this juncture as the upcoming year is one that is marked by a set of salient events in the field of disarmament and international security.

The success of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was a major cause for optimism, and spurred an encouraging momentum. The ratification of the new START by the United States and the Russian Federation was a first step in the right direction towards realizing the “nuclear-weapon-free-world”.

In this context, the success of our efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament remains Egypt’s top priority. It rests on utilizing the full implementation of the four action plans adopted by the NPT Review Conference in 2010 to advance the ambitious agenda of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime worldwide. This would open the door for other actions towards a ‘nuclear weapon free world’ that would include the full ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) bringing the treaty into force, and furthering negotiations on a treaty for the prohibition of the production of fissile materials including stockpiles for military uses within the Conference on Disarmament, along with initiating negotiations on a draft treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons which has long been advocated by the Non-Aligned Movement, in addition to making Negative Security Assurances universal, unconditional, and legally-binding, until we achieve our objective of total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

This comprehensive approach, based on the integrated linkage between the full implementation of the 2010 action plans, including achieving the universality of the treaty, requires that the five nuclear-weapon States redouble their efforts far beyond the general follow up meeting held in Paris last July, which produced limited results as reflected in its final statement. It would require that the nuclear-weapon States fully implement their obligations undertaken in the 2010 Action Plan, particularly Actions 5 to 22 and to present transparent unified reporting according to quantifiable and qualifiable indicators which would be easily evaluated for measurement of progress in implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

Within the framework of implementation of the commitments contained in the plans of action adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the Secretary-General was entrusted to convene a regional conference in 2012 on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. States of our
region agreed for the first time to extend the scope of the zone to include other weapons of mass destruction with a view to overcoming unsubstantiated claims that the existence of the Israeli ambiguous nuclear capabilities is justified by a potential regional threat from other types of weapons of mass destruction. Arab States, in the mean time, made sure that paragraph 8 of the Action Plan addresses the importance of achieving parallel progress on the two tracks on the nuclear and on other weapons of mass destruction. Despite intensive consultations carried out by the Arab states towards the full implementation of Action Plan 4 through contacts with the Secretary General and the three depository States, no concrete results have been achieved yet. Egypt, hence stresses once again the importance of promptly appointing a consensual high profile facilitator and the determination of the host country, so as to allow the preparations for Conference to commence as soon as possible.

In this regard, Egypt appreciates the efforts made by the European Union in convening the seminar in Brussels according to paragraph 7/e of the Action Plan, and appreciates the participation of both Iran and Israel in its deliberations. Though the Seminar scope was focused more on confidence-building measures, and not on the implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, which remains the core term of reference for the 2012 Conference, it still opened the door to frank discussions on all issues surrounding the establishment of the zone.

While some claim that the Arab Spring would divert the attention of Arab states away from the subject, I would like to underscore that the democratic trend prevailing in our region today has further enhanced the interest and strengthened the will to establish the Zone, and to have Israel ratify the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon state and subject its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This would in turn ensure that the rest of the countries in the region refrain from developing or otherwise acquiring nuclear weapons, as well as guaranteeing the accession of the countries of the region to the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions, in addition to their ratification of the CTBT. The Arab countries have taken the extra step by taking another initiative not to table the resolution on Israeli Nuclear Capabilities at the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency this September, to create the positive atmosphere that would facilitate achieving the desired results in the 2012 conference. Therefore, our countries demand that all the parties concerned stick to the letter and spirit of the Action Plan on this important matter, and commit to its full and speedy implementation.

Egypt presents two draft resolutions to the current Session of the Committee, which are entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of Middle East", and "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East". I would like to clarify that the latter does not aim at the alienation or isolation of any country in the region, exactly as the Action Plan 4 of the 2010 NPT Review Conference does not try to impose any substantive or procedural decisions on any state in our region. The resolutions are meant to contribute significantly, not only to regional but also to world security. A goal worthy as ever of support by all Member States. We hope that the current Session will witness increasing support for those resolutions, in a manner that positively corresponds
to the international drive towards eliminating the threat of nuclear weapons from the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the conclusion of the previous session of the First Committee, the United Nations took its share in searching for means to advance the disarmament agenda at the multilateral level, the most recent being the plenary debate held by the General Assembly last July as a follow-up to the high-level meeting held by the Secretary-General on 24 September 2010 with a focus on revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament. This debate has clearly shown, in our view, that the absence of political will to reach a balanced outcome that reflects the interests of all countries remains the main obstacle impeding the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and the Disarmament Commission in New York and that the rules of procedures are not the problem. This conclusion comes as no surprise since the solution always lied in addressing all the issues on the agenda of the conference through an integrated approach that most importantly includes negotiation on nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances as well as on a possible treaty on fissile material including stockpiles for military purposes.

While we salute the efforts of the Secretary General to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), all such initiatives must be geared in the direction of reinforcing the capability of the CD to deal effectively with disarmament issues within its substantive and procedural frameworks. We are hence deeply concerned about the calls by some to bypass the Conference on Disarmament through transferring the negotiations of topics that fall exclusively on its agenda to other forums. This would sharply erode the credibility of the CD, even if this negotiating forum is the General Assembly. The historical fact must be recalled that the consensus rule which governs the Conference on Disarmament was neither proposed nor claimed by the Non-Aligned countries. Rather, it was used by other Members aiming at taking control of CD activities. We must hence make every possible effort to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament through a strong political will, to ensure that it remains the sole multilateral negotiating body in disarmament - in accordance to its own rules.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the First Committee concluded its work the last year, several events were held to discuss issues relating to the agenda of disarmament and non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the most recent of which was the High-Level Meeting On Nuclear Safety And Security, called for by the Secretary General. It was a commendable initiative as it shed light and attracted attention to these important technical issues, especially in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear power accident. Egypt expresses once again its sincere condolences, and extends solidarity and support to the people and Government of Japan in the aftermath of this accident. We reiterate our readiness to provide assistance to any country that faces a similar challenge as we are all exposed to this risk, regardless of our level of development. The IAEA should assist Member States on emergency preparedness and response to nuclear accidents, through capacity building in the field of crisis management, promoting transfer of technologies related to
making nuclear stations resilient to natural disasters. This should take place within the broader framework of providing support by the IAEA to States that establish nuclear reactors for energy purposes to meet their developmental. It requires as well that developed countries and companies commit to transfer of technology.

Mr. Chairman,

Next year is of particular importance in the field of conventional weapons, which naturally come after weapons of mass destruction in the list of disarmament priorities in accordance to SSOD I. Conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, have a direct impact on inter and intra state conflicts. Africa in particular faces a challenge in this regard. Any effort to tackle this challenge must recognize the relevant principles of the Charter, in particular the right of States to manufacture, import and possess conventional weapons for legitimate self-defense. Against this background, Egypt will participate actively in the review of the implementation of the Program of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons to be held in August 2012. While the responsibility to fully implement that program is the national level, the International community also has the responsibility to provide financial and technical support, particularly for developing countries. In this regard, Egypt stresses that the selective application of the guidelines of the plan of action would only undermine efforts to achieve progress in this regard. It will further deepen divisions. We must also emphasize here that the main producers of small arms and light weapons bear the primary responsibility in the promotion of national legislation to regulate the illicit production, trade and brokering in small arms and light weapons to prevent the leakage of these weapons into conflict zones.

Mr. Chairman,

As the final Preparatory Committee for the Arms Trade Treaty will take place in February followed by the conference in July 2012, Egypt still believes that the feasibility of a potential treaty will depend on objectives that are collectively agreed upon and practical implementation mechanisms that would avert political abuse of the treaty, thus ensuring its universality. Egypt stresses that any consideration of the feasibility of an Arms Trade Treaty potential depends on its scope. Any potential treaty must therefore comply fully with the letter and spirit of all the principles of the Charter, including the legitimate right of States to acquire conventional arms for legitimate self-defense. The potential of the treaty rests in its ability to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade, production and brokering of conventional weapons along with the promotion of transparency and accountability in the production, import, transit and export of conventional weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

The agenda before us is daunting. This should not, however, curb our ambition. It should only further drive us to commit to exert every effort and uphold every principle of justice, fairness and non selectivity. These principles are essential for generating the political will necessary to achieve an ambitious agenda. Let me reassure you once again that Egypt is already on board to apply these principles, and to work with you and other members towards achieving success in disarmament and international security matters.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.