STATEMENT
by
TURKEY

67th SESSION OF THE
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FIRST COMMITTEE

THEMATIC DEBATE
on
“OTHER WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION”

22 October 2012, New York
Mr. Chairman,

Mankind has a bad reputation for repeating history. But there are some instances in history that should never be repeated. World War I, World War II and recent conflicts, which remind us of the disastrous effects of the weapons of mass destruction, are among such instances. These instances should only remain in the annals of history, which we consult only to draw lessons.

Fortunately, mankind also has a good reputation for progress, by making conscious efforts to draw such lessons and to not repeat past mistakes. The 1925 Geneva Protocol, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), are among such efforts. They constitute mankind’s attempt to never use 2 of the 3 most catastrophic categories of weapons of mass destruction. They are the fruits of arduous negotiations, and the reflection of the will of nations, for poison or disease to be never used against humanity, ever again. Turkey is among those nations. As a reflection of this will, Turkey is party to all three multilateral instruments that guide the norms regarding the cluster under discussion today, and does not hold, develop or conduct any research on such weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

The existence of chemical weapons in the Middle East is a major concern for Turkey, countries in the region and the international community as a whole. The past use of chemical weapons in two countries neighbouring Turkey – and at the very threshold of the 21st century – are painful reminders of the indiscriminate and inhumane nature of this weapon, and the validity of this danger.

Fortunately, the Chemical Weapons Convention is designed, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is working hard to prevent the actualization of this danger. This October 1st, following the 15th anniversary of the foundation of the OPCW, we all shared our views, concerns and hopes regarding this issue, here in New York, at the High Level Event organized by Director General Mr. Ahmet Üzümcü. We also celebrated the unique role the OPCW plays. The Organization has overseen the destruction of three-quarters of all declared chemical weapons and routinely inspects chemical industry throughout the world. Its recent assistance to the destruction of the remaining warfare chemicals in Libya is a fine example of the OPCW’s effectiveness and prominence.

But, ongoing developments and state of affairs around the world requires the OPCW and the international community to remain alert, and take swift action in the case of any unexpected eventualities concerning stockpiles or use of chemical agents. Current events in Syria constitute a valid example in this context. We would like to hereby echo the incessant calls by the international community and the UN Secretary General, to those who possess such weapons, to keep them secure until their destruction, and above all, to never use them under any circumstances. With the Secretary General’s own words during the High Level event on October 1st, “The use of such weapons would be an outrageous crime with dire consequences”.

Mr. Chairman,

The spread and transfer of dual-use goods and technology that can be used to produce biological weapons and possibility of them falling into the hands of terrorists is another major concern for the humanity. Coupled with other weapons of mass destruction, the fact that those agents are so easy to attain has made the concerns all the more significant, in the last decades.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) is a key instrument we have at our disposal to combat the proliferation of such weapons. We call on its effective implementation, universalization and strengthening. We welcome the outcomes of the 7th BTWC Review Conference.

Turkey believes that the exchange of scientific and technological information among States Parties will promote transparency and thereby contribute to reducing the risks of the use of biological agents and technical equipment for purposes prohibited by the Convention.

On the other hand, the establishment of the Implementation Support Unit for the BTWC was a welcome development. However, the Convention still lacks a verification regime, which is a useful mechanism, as in the case of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We believe a similar mechanism in the BTWC will enable to strengthen the Convention's effectiveness.

Mr. Chairman,

The international community must continue to do its utmost to prevent the acquisition of biological and chemical warfare agents by terrorists, other unauthorized actors or even states, and for their stockpiles to be destroyed. In this context, the universalization and effective implementation of both the CWC and the BTWC must be a priority. We call on all countries to ratify and implement these two important instruments.

In this context, regional approaches that pave the way for eventual universality should be utilized. Turkey has been actively promoting the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We look forward to the convening of a Conference in 2012 on the establishment of this zone, pursuant to the decision taken at the NPT 2010 Review Conference. We view this conference as an initial step in a long process, the success of which will depend on the genuine political engagement and participation of all states in the region. We welcome and support the Facilitator's efforts to successfully convene this Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

We have to strive to emphasize the progressive face of mankind, and to not repeat past horrendous mistakes. This is even truer, now that we live in a new age, where we have the necessary legal instruments, information, experience, technology and other tools at our disposal, for sense and humanity to prevail; and as a result, for all WMDs to be forgotten in the dark pages of history.

Thank you.