Statement

at the

Sixty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly

First Committee

Disarmament Machinery

New York, November 2012

Check against delivery
Mr. Chairman,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and would like to add the following remarks.

For Ireland, multilateralism remains at the core of our approach to the achievement and maintenance of peace and security. Ireland has long advocated for disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation as the cornerstones of efforts to achieve peace. We continue to believe in the central role of the United Nations in an effective system of multilateralism. The bodies operating under the aegis of the United Nations dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation, and the rules based system of international law that they have helped to create, remain as vital today as they were established.

At the same time, Ireland strongly considers that the UN disarmament machinery is badly in need of fresh momentum and a greater sense of purpose and direction. Much good work has been done in recent years in the fields of disarmament, non-proliferations and arms control but it has, in the main, taken place elsewhere. The formal UN disarmament machinery has all too often appeared, even if this appearance is not a fully fair assessment, to be a bystander rather than a participant.

Ms. Chairman,

I would like to focus briefly on the three bodies that form the UN’s disarmament machinery, this Committee of the General Assembly, the UN Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament.

The First Committee should provide a forum in which all UN Members can exchange views on emerging disarmament issues and collectively plan ways to address these challenges. My delegation would, therefore, like to see a stronger emphasis in our work on addressing new and urgent challenges. Our work must not only be seen as relevant but it should also show policy leadership and highlight new paths forward in multilateral approaches to disarmament.

The deliberative role envisaged for the Disarmament Commission in SSODI was to address in detail disarmament issues and therefore to give impetus to the other disarmament bodies that emerged from SSODI. However, its recent deliberations have not realistically been as productive on substance. The discussion that did take place this year on working methods should continue.

The Conference on Disarmament is now in a very unhappy position within the UN system. It is, in Ireland’s view, extremely untenable that paralysis on a programme of work continues, year after year. In his opening message to the Conference this year, the UN Secretary General noted the achievements of the Conference in the past but again expressed his concern that the Conference was not living up to expectations. Despite attempts during 2012, notably the draft decision on a Programme of Work presented by Egypt, as President, in March, the CD has not agreed on and followed through on a Programme of Work for over a decade.

It is up to the membership of the CD to put an end to this stalemate. What is already abundantly clear is that we cannot continue with a paralysed CD without also doing real damage to multilateral approaches to disarmament. Ireland fully shares the growing impatience with the CD’s stalemate and greatly regrets that it has not been able to resume work. We affirm again our strong support for the expansion of the CD membership to any UN Member State that wishes to join.
In concluding Mr. Chairman, my delegation would like to recall that since its establishment, UNIDIR has provided an authoritative source of research on important disarmament topics. My delegation values the contribution that UNIDIR has made and looks forward to the continuing contribution of this valuable and independent research institution.