STATEMENT BY

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on the occasion of the sixty-eight session of the General Assembly, First Committee,
Thematic Debate on Disarmament Machinery

NEW YORK, 21 October 2013
Mr. Chairman,

At the 66th session of the UN General Assembly, the Netherlands together with Switzerland and South-Africa tabled a resolution on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. The resolution was adopted by consensus by this Committee and subsequently the General Assembly as resolution 66/66.

This resolution came about as a result of the range of concerns expressed by the international community regarding the lack of progress in the relevant disarmament fora. Its main aim was to unite all UN-member states on the need to revitalize the work of the multilateral disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament and to take forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. In this resolution, States were encouraged to build on the work that had already been undertaken and to explore, consider and consolidate options, proposals and elements for revitalization.

Last year, taking note of the discussions on the revitalization of the Conference that had taken place in the CD and of the different initiatives being pursued in the First Committee that were directly or indirectly related to the work of the CD, the authors of the resolution 66/66 elected to introduce a decision to include this item on the agenda of the 68th session of the UN General Assembly First Committee.

This year, we have noted some encouraging developments regarding the revitalization of the work of the CD, reflecting the growing importance that UN Member States accord to this issue. This is illustrated by the continuation and the deepening of discussions on the revitalization of the CD in 2013. It is demonstrated by the extensive efforts undertaken by the Presidents of the CD to secure agreement on a programme of work. It is reflected in the proposals made by the Secretary General of the Conference and Member States that led to the CD’s decision to establish an Informal Working Group to produce a programme of work. We welcome this decision and are committed to working with others for a programme of work that is indeed 'robust in substance and progressive over time'. We also duly take note of other proposals to address the working methods of the CD and its membership. We urge CD Member States to intensify their efforts to take the revitalization process forward in 2014.

We are also encouraged by the advancement of a number of initiatives related to nuclear disarmament, giving new impetus towards the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear-weapons free world. As such, we believe that these initiatives only serve to strengthen the work of the CD. They include the upcoming GGE which will develop recommendations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; the Open-ended Working Group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations; the growing concern expressed by States about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons; and the High-Level meeting on nuclear disarmament. We express the hope that we can build on the positive outcomes of this initiatives in a constructive, including and non-divisive way.

Notwithstanding these encouraging developments, it is clear that much more remains to be done. We see an urgent need to intensify further efforts to revitalize the work of the CD and the UN disarmament machinery. The current deadlock has for too long prevented the CD from fulfilling its task, in particular to take forward nuclear disarmament, serving to undermine its credibility and it is our hope that the initiatives I referred to will be taken forward.

As one of the authors of resolution 66/66, we have with Switzerland and South-Africa carefully considered these various developments. Together we have decided not to submit a follow-up resolution at this year’s session, but to introduce a decision including this item on the agenda of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly First Committee. We will closely monitor progress towards the revitalization of the CD and UN disarmament machinery. We will continue to advocate for progress towards this end and stand ready to engage with all delegations on revisiting the implementation of resolution 66/66 next year.