STATEMENT by

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FIRST COMMITTEE

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to begin by congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. We are confident that the First Committee will successfully complete its deliberations under your able leadership, experience and diplomatic skills.

Mr. Chairman,

We are meeting today against the backdrop of a world where, after nearly two decades of decline, the numbers of conflicts have begun to rise once again. Political instability and insecurity severely affect certain parts of the world, causing mass suffering and devastating ordinary people's lives and futures. We are also faced with increasing common global security challenges - due to new means of technology and globalization. World military spending is not relenting even to the economic difficulties faced by many nations. To make matters worse, the mechanisms we have put in place to balance these challenges are not performing as they should.

I do not wish to paint a bleak picture, but there's an "existential malaise" that we need to address expeditiously.

Mr. Chairman,

Our common aspiration remains a world without nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We all expressed our views on this important matter during the fruitful High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament, organized by NAM two weeks ago. We were encouraged by the strong expression of support for this aspiration. But this needs to be complemented with concrete steps.

The centerpiece mechanism towards this aspiration, namely the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), does unfortunately not function as effectively as we wish.

Turkey believes that an equal and balanced treatment of the three mutually reinforcing pillars will solidify the integrity and credibility of the NPT regime.

The extent the Nuclear Weapon States are able to fulfill their disarmament commitments impacts its success. In this context Turkey welcomes President Obama's Berlin call towards further reductions. At the same time, strict adherence by all NPT states to their non-proliferation obligations, also affects the credibility of the regime. Finally, the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy needs to be carefully upheld. Naturally this right comes with relevant international obligations.

However, some countries still unfortunately remain outside this regime. We support its universalization, as well as its effective implementation in good faith and consistency.

Mr. Chairman,

We acknowledge the international safeguards system of the IAEA as the fundamental tool in global non-proliferation efforts. In this context, Turkey recognizes the need for further strengthening and universalization of the Agency's verification authority. We regard the comprehensive safeguards and the Additional Protocol of the IAEA as an indispensable verification standard, and call on all
States, that have not yet done so, to sign, ratify and implement them as soon as possible. We believe that strengthening the safeguards system and promoting the Agency’s role and finances are also essential for the sustainability of the NPT regime in the long run.

It is our firm belief that States in full compliance with their safeguards obligations should have unhindered access to civilian nuclear technology, as provided for in the NPT. In our view, this would only contribute to the further strengthening and universalization of the NPT regime. Having said that, we must also ensure that all requisite steps be taken so that there will be no diversion of nuclear programs from peaceful to military uses.

On the other hand, Turkey strongly believes that the cessation of all nuclear weapon tests constitutes an indispensable measure to achieve both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, we stress the centrality of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in achieving these objectives. The international community has spent enough time waiting for the Treaty to enter into force. We once again encourage all states, especially Annex II states, to ratify the Treaty, as soon as possible.

Creating conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, and other weapons of mass destruction, is a major investment towards a safer world and undiminished security for all. Turkey remains deeply concerned by the possible humanitarian catastrophes for humanity, should these lethal weapons be ever used, intentionally or accidentally. We, therefore, supported and actively participated in the Oslo Conference on the “Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons”. We are looking forward to making further contributions at the upcoming meeting in Mexico.

Mr. Chairman,

Turkey is part of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) along with eleven other countries from all around the globe. The NPDI is proving to be a Middle Powers Initiative that promotes the implementation of the consensus outcomes of the 2010 Review Conference. We continue to make our share towards the advancement of the goals of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

We are past the half-mark of the current NPT Review Cycle and the next Review Conference is approaching fast. But we are not yet able to put building blocks on the existing Treaty basis, commitments are overlooked and promises for the present review cycle are not upheld.

I am specifically referring to our promise to the world to hold an International Conference for the establishment of a Middle East free from all weapons of mass destruction in 2012. Despite the negative conditions that exist in the region, international community, in particular the conveners, should not spare any effort to organize this conference as soon as possible. We should not turn a blind eye to the fact that the success of the Review Cycle is very much dependent on the realization of this project.

Mr. Chairman,

The Conference on Disarmament has a special responsibility in the contemporary disarmament agenda. We should strive to maintain the relevance of the Conference by fulfilling its fundamental task. In this regard, we still keep our hope that the Conference will resume substantive work as early as possible. The CD needs to be revitalized, in order to resume the unique negotiation role
with which it is mandated. Turkey believes that the Conference possesses the mandate, membership and rules of procedure in order to effectively discharge its duties.

We see the recently established Informal Working Group as an indication of a shared goal of the need to come up with a consensual Program of Work urgently.

Moreover, it is our firm belief that starting negotiations on Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty will be a significant building block. It will further pave the way for parallel advances in the other core agenda items, including nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and the prevention of arms race in outer space.

The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention are important components of the global system against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Turkey does not possess any such weapons and reiterates its call for a wider adherence to and an effective implementation of these Conventions. We actively support the efforts to promote the implementation and universalization of these instruments.

In this context, we view Security Council Resolution 2118, on the verification and elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons inventory, as a significant step ahead, further strengthening the universal normative framework established by the CWC, by determining that the use of chemical weapons anywhere constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The Syrian regime must abide by its promises. Non-compliance will have consequences.

Mr. Chairman,

Very often we speak about the threat posed by nuclear and chemical weapons. However there is another type that is equally threatening, that is conventional weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons. Due to the mass suffering they cause, these weapons are even regarded as weapons of mass destruction in many parts of the world, namely in Africa.

In this context, the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation, uncontrolled spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons pose a significant threat to peace and security, as well as to the social and economic development of many countries. There is a well-documented relationship between their illicit trade, terrorism and organized crime.

To this end, Turkey was heartened by the conclusion and signing of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which was a momentous achievement. Since its outset, Turkey supported and actively participated in the process, thereafter signing the ATT. The Treaty’s real strength will be in its universalization and implementation. We therefore invite all states, in particular the lead exporters, to sign and ratify it, for the Treaty to enter into force without delay.

Turkey will continue to actively contribute to all efforts within the UN and other fora, for the establishment of effective norms and rules aimed at eradicating illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. In this regard, Turkey remains committed to the effective implementation and further strengthening of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We were thus pleased that the 2012 Review Conference yielded results.
Mr. Chairman,

At the beginning of my statement, I mentioned the malaise in the system. I furthermore touched upon the many challenges facing us. The First Committee is an important occasion for all of us to address these challenges and influence the future. We should uphold this responsibility. We hope that these deliberations will contribute to eliminate the obstacles standing in the way of a safer and more secure world. I wish to conclude by assuring you of our delegation's full support and cooperation in bringing this session to a successful conclusion.

Thank you.