Statement by
H.E. Mr. Alvaro Mendonça e Moura
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative

General Debate of
The First Committee
14th October 2014

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I congratulate you on your appointment as Chairman of this Committee and I assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation. Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

Mr. Chairman,

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is in itself a major achievement of the international community, and we are very pleased that in a relatively short period of time it turned possible to build up the sure prospect of the Treaty entering into force on December 24th. The process of enlarging the universe of State Parties to the Treaty must continue and Portugal appeals to all States not yet Parties of the Treaty to ratify it.

Portugal is confident that an ATTs’ strong, transparent and effective implementation will valuably contribute to fostering peace and security and will have an important humanitarian impact particularly in regions affected by conflict, extremist threats or even emerging from conflicts. The Treaty will also help to foster dialogue, multilateralism and confidence-building between all relevant national, regional and international actors involved in arms control, so contributing to improve the international security environment.

Portugal looks forward to the 1st Conference of State Parties next year in Mexico.

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal attaches high importance to the 2015 Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Although many questions remain at stake, the credibility and effectiveness of the TNP must be preserved and reinforced. We believe that a constructive engagement of all will make possible a positive and consensual outcome, also advancing our collective strive for a world free of nuclear weapons. The NPT Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime and its three pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy must be equally promoted in a balanced way, as they constitute altogether the object and the purpose of the Treaty.

The establishment of a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction is an aspiration for which we must continue to strive.
Portugal believes that it is crucial to remain seized of the implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, guided by the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. We urge all States in the region to continue to engage with Ambassador Laajava of Finland and the co-conveners in a spirit of cooperation and compromise.

We also share the well-grounded concern expressed during the 2010 NPT Review Conference related to the “catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons”.

As regards nuclear non-proliferation, we regret the continued lack of cooperation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We are also deeply concerned with the reported DPRK's continued development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles programs.

Regarding the Iranian nuclear program and the post Geneva “Joint Action Plan”, we encourage the ongoing negotiation process between Iran and the E3/EU+3, and wish it will further proceed with renewed political impetus in a spirit of openness, transparency and good will, leading to a comprehensive and final agreement.

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal maintains a long standing demand regarding the beginning of negotiations towards the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament, which since 1999 has not known any progress in that regard. We are of the view that this situation violates a basic non-discrimination requirement that should fully apply to a multilateral UN body as the Disarmament Conference is - the single multilateral disarmament forum to negotiating legal instruments regarding non-proliferation and disarmament. In this context, we consider the beginning of the work of a Special Rapporteur a matter of urgency, which is in line with the recent nomination of a Friend of the Chair for enlargement purposes.

The fact is that the Conference on Disarmament remains in an agonizing and frustrating stalemate requiring urgently a joint commitment and constructive work to overcome it. Some good progress have occurred during the current year, and hopefully it will encourage further impetus and closer cooperation to succeed in improving the international multilateral mechanisms aiming to promote a safer world through non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. The adoption and subsequent implementation of new arms-related treaties and agreements are therefore critical tasks to pursue.
Mr. Chairman,

We very much appreciate the outstanding work of the OPCW in cooperation with the International Community in Syria. It stands out as an illustration of how success is achievable when joint political will mobilizes the required efforts. Notwithstanding, we remain concerned by recent reports questioning the accuracy of Syria’s notifications on the entirety of its chemical arsenal and related structures.

The fact that non-state actors, including radical, extremist and terrorist groups and movements, might gain access to means and expertise related to different types of weapons of massive destruction is a matter of great concern and must be addressed by the international community as a matter of priority.

Mr. Chairman,

New challenges to the non-proliferation efforts must not be underestimated and deserve to be firmly tackled. The advances on technology are meant to promote the human well-being, but its illegitimate use for potentially dangerous purposes involves serious threats, therefore stressing the need of effective international regulation. The developments related to Outer Space activities and to Cyberspace sphere create not only new borders for science to expand, but also new borders for security, adding challenges that ought to be addressed by the International Community as a whole.

Therefore, multilateral instruments must be established to ensure that Outer Space and Cyberspace are only used for peaceful, scientific and development goals. In this regard, we welcome the outcome of the Group of Governmental Experts’ (GGE) latest report on transparency and confidence-building measures in Outer Space and also fully support The International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities, which constitutes, in our view, a meaningful example of the kind of instruments required for that purpose.

In the field of technologically advanced new weapons as armed drones and fully autonomous lethal weapons, Portugal is in favour of enhancing international discussions on ways to better address its regulation, particularly in light of international, human rights and humanitarian law requirements.

Mr. Chairman,
The Convention on Anti-personnel Mines is one of the most universally accepted and implemented disarmament treaties, with huge humanitarian impact and, in this regard, the recently held Maputo Conference stands out as a case of what can be achieved with joint political will and determination. There is still a long way to go, but we fully support the implementation of the Maputo Action Plan as the next move in the right direction.

On another hand, recent reports of ISIS' use of Cluster Munitions in their campaign of terror have brought this category of munitions to a higher level of awareness and even alarm. For the first time, a non-State actor has used such a vicious and lethal conventional weapon. Portugal totally condemns it and looks forward to the First Review Conference of the CCW – Convention on Cluster Munitions to be held next year in Dubrovnik.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate Portugal’s continued strong support to Humanitarian Law and Human Rights’ values to be considered in all disarmament and non-proliferation discussions and efforts.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.