Statement by

H.E. Ms. Patricia O'Brien
Permanent Representative to the United Nations
and other international organisations in Geneva

at the

UNGA 69 First Committee
Thematic debate on
Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

New York, October 2014

Check against delivery
Mr. Chairman,

Ireland aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by the European Union.

Weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery represent one of the pressing global threats to the security of humanity in our time.

Last year, my delegation, along with the overwhelming majority of States in this Committee condemned as utterly reprehensible the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We still recall the horrific images of children gasping for breath after ingesting sarin in August 2013 near Damascus which propelled the international community into action.

Ireland welcomes the effective and cooperative work by the international community to destroy Syria’s chemical weapons stockpile, as well as Syria’s accession to the CWC. We call on Syria to demonstrate full compliance with the CWC and to address further queries transparently and completely. We welcome the progress made by the UN/OPCW mission on destroying chemical weapons from Syria since autumn 2013 and we are encouraged that work has now begun on destroying facilities. Ireland was pleased to make a financial contribution to this important work.

It is however with the gravest concern that we note the most recent report of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact Finding Mission which found ‘compelling confirmation’ that chlorine was used ‘systematically and repeatedly’ as a weapon in Syria this year. Ireland has called for the referral of war crimes in Syria to the International Criminal Court and we reiterate that call now.

It is completely and utterly unacceptable that, 100 years after their first use in World War 1, our world should once again see the use of chemical weapons. Next year, an event will be held in Ypres, Belgium to commemorate the Centenary of the First large scale Chemical Weapons Use in 1915. My delegation sees this commemoration as an opportunity to increase momentum towards a future free of Chemical Weapons. Ireland again calls on those last remaining States to ratify or accede to the Treaty without delay and for States Parties to meet their commitments in particular in relation to destruction.

Ireland continues to give high priority to the further strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). As the world seeks ways to handle and mitigate the tragic effects of the current Ebola crisis, we are reminded of the truly deadly impact which biological pathogens can have and the necessity of a strong, effective and universal BTWC. As we begin our preparations for the 2016 Review Conference, we will in particular study how the Convention can be made more effective and how we can ensure compliance with its provisions. My delegation looks forward to further discussion and consideration of these matters at the upcoming Meeting of States Parties in December with a view to a strong and successful outcome for the 2016 Review Conference.

As UN Security Council Resolution 1540 reached its tenth anniversary this year, the importance of this resolution which obliges States, inter alia, to refrain from supporting by any means non-State actors from developing, acquiring, manufacturing, possessing, transporting, transferring or using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their delivery systems, cannot be denied. This year the world has borne witness to unspeakable acts of violence and inhumanity by groups such as ISIS and one thing is clear, we must do everything we can to ensure these groups can never attain weapons of mass destruction.

Ireland wishes to reaffirm our support for this and subsequent Security Council resolutions. Full implementation of the steps identified therein help not only to prevent the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups, but also to effectively implement obligations under both the BTWC and the CWC.
The proliferation of ballistic missiles represents a threat to international peace and security both in its own right and as potential means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction. The Hague Code of Conduct is the only multilateral transparency and confidence building instrument concerning the spread of ballistic missiles and Ireland is proud to adhere to the Code along with 136 other states. We encourage all states to adhere to this Code. Effective export control regimes are an essential element to prevent missile proliferation and in this context the Missile Technology Control Regime plays an important role. My delegation looks forward to continued discussions within the MTCR on strengthening its effectiveness and strongly supports enlargement to all EU Member States.

Finally, my delegation regrets that despite reaffirmations of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East in 2000 and 2010 and despite the agreement on practical next steps reached in 2010, which Ireland was pleased to have helped broker, no conference on establishing a Middle East Zone free of nuclear Weapons and other WMD has taken place. Recalling our General Statement last week, my delegation wishes to reiterate our support for the tireless and unstinting efforts of Under-Secretary of State Jakko Laajava of Finland and all the stakeholders involved in discussions to convene a conference on establishing a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMD. We strongly hope this conference will take place soon as an important contribution toward the full implementation of the 1995 resolution.

The tragedy of events in Syria this year demonstrates that as long as these weapons of mass destruction exist, we can never be truly certain that attacks using these abhorrent weapons will not repeat themselves in the future. And so it is up to us, the international community, to redouble our efforts to ensure history does not repeat itself again in Syria or elsewhere, we owe this to our citizens and to all humanity.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.