STATEMENT

By

TURKEY

at

the General Debate of the First Committee
of the 69th Session of the
United Nations General Assembly

9 October 2014, New York
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 your able leadership and expertise will contribute to the successful achievement of the Committee's tasks.

Mr. Chairman,

Once again, the First Committee has started its work against a backdrop of a myriad of threats against international peace and security as violence and aggression continue to take their toll mostly from among the civilian populations of our nations. With an increasing common awareness that the human suffering in one part of the world will inevitably feed the sense of insecurity in the other parts, I believe, this Committee will also this year make great efforts to achieve tangible results successfully.

As we have been faced with increasing global challenges to security and stability—often exacerbated by new technological advances—overall military spending continues to augment and there is a growing global trend to arm, whereas this very Committee's primary and ultimately objective is disarmament, as well as non-proliferation. This stark contradiction further impedes the disarmament machinery to perform effectively.

Mr. Chairman,

We fully share the concerns regarding the danger posed by the nuclear weapons to humanity and to the nature. Our common aspiration remains a world without nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Since the High Level Meeting of the 68th Session of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament, Turkey has continued to work with other member states, international organizations and the civil society to uphold this ultimate goal. We welcomed the first anniversary of the International Day of the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, which was commemorated on September 26, 2014 as an important event for awareness raising.

Many distinguished representatives have expressed here—or will express—their respective countries’ readiness to contribute further to a world without nuclear weapons. We concur with these strong expressions since they are encouraging for this aspiration. Nevertheless, we also believe that they need 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. But we should keep our optimism and seek practical outcomes while sticking to our ideals.

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 to which the Nuclear Weapon States are willing to fulfill their disarmament commitments impacts NPT’s success. At the same time, strict adherence by all NPT states to their non-proliferation obligations, also affects the credibility of the regime. We welcome, in this respect, the reports they have submitted to the NPT Review Conference and invite them to consider measures to ensure further transparency without compromising security.

Finally, the right to peaceful use of nuclear energy needs to be carefully upheld. Naturally this right comes with relevant international obligations.
On the other hand, some member states still unfortunately remain outside the NPT 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. With this understanding, Turkey actively participated in the 58th General Conference of the IAEA last month.

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. 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. We welcome the ratification of the CTBT by Iraq, Brunei Darussalam, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, and Niue. 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 and Nayarit Conferences on the “Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons”. We are looking forward to making further contributions at the third meeting in Vienna in December 2014.

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 true 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.

As the current NPT Review Cycle is coming close to end, we share the frustration of many member states as well as the international civil society upon the non-implementation of the consensus Action Plan of the 2010 Review Conference. Till the next Review Conference in 2015, we must have been able to put building blocks on the existing Treaty basis, but 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 Zone free from all weapons of mass destruction in 2012. Turkey supports the establishment of internationally recognized and effectively verifiable zones free of
nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, wherever feasible. In this respect, we welcome the signing of the Protocol to the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (CANWFZ) by five nuclear weapon states, providing legally-binding assurances not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the Treaty parties. We encourage full ratification of the treaties and protocols of all five regional zones.

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 reassume 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 welcomed the re-establishment of the 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 in Geneva 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 (CWC) 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.

Bearing in mind that the CWC is the only comprehensive multilateral treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, Turkey will continue to cooperate with the OPCW, particularly in regard to the dismantlement of the Syrian regime's chemical weapons inventory. Turkey condemns the systematic use of chemical weapons on civilian populations in Syria, which is an abhorrent violation of the UN Charter and the international humanitarian law and a threat against international peace and security.

In this regard, we are utterly concerned that the second report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission indicates the Syrian regime's involvement in those chemical attacks.

Therefore, Turkey believes that UN Security Council Resolution 2118, on the verification and elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons inventory, would be fully implemented only when the regime's entire capacity -including non-declared chemical facilities- is dismantled.

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 welcomes the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on December 24, 2014. 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.

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,

The First Committee is an important occasion for all of us to address the challenges regrouped in seven clusters. Each of these clusters deserve particular emphasis, which is a common responsibility on us together. 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.