STATEMENT

BY

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GENERAL DEBATE IN THE FIRST COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT AND
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

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Mr. Chairman,

I congratulate you, Ambassador van Oosterom, and other Bureau members on your election, and assure you of Uganda’s full cooperation and support. I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor, H.E. Courtenay Rattray, for his leadership and commendable work done during the previous session.

At the outset, my delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by H.E Mr. Abdurrahman Mohammed Fachir, The Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by Ambassador Vandi Minnah, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone on behalf of the African group.

The end of the Cold War over two decades ago should have led to rapid progress towards the global elimination of nuclear weapons. Instead, the Nuclear Weapon States are maintaining thousands of them, many on high alert, and are continuing to design, research and test, and deploy new nuclear weapon systems.

Unless efforts are made by the Nuclear Weapon States to eliminate their stockpiles under international agreements, other countries are also likely to acquire nuclear weapons hence creating an arms race and providing an avenue for openly testing nuclear weapons through nuclear explosions and declaring nuclear capability. Nuclear states have a legal obligation under Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons within a reasonable timeframe.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear weapons have the capacity to pose a threat to the survival of humanity and as long as they continue to exist threat to humanity will remain. This coupled with the perceived political value and prestige attached to these weapons, are further factors that encourage proliferation and non-compliance with international obligations. Moreover, it is of great concern that, even after the end of the Cold War, the threat of nuclear annihilation remains part of the 21st century international security environment. All States must intensify their efforts to outlaw nuclear weapons and achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

The 2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) highlighted the stark reality of the increasing divisions between the States parties over the future of nuclear disarmament. We should seek to bridge those gaps and work together to ensure that the NPT can continue to serve as a vital element of global security.
Mr. Chairman,

Serious concerns related to humanitarian dimensions of nuclear weapons have been voiced repeatedly before and by the previous speakers. When the horrific consequences of their use became apparent in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a clear position was made calling for the abolition of these weapons of "extermination."

The use of nuclear weapons also raises important legal issues. Nuclear weapons are unique because of their destructive capacity and because of their uncontrollable effects in space and time. All rules of international humanitarian law apply fully to nuclear weapons; those rules notably include the rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution, as well as the prohibition to cause injury or unnecessary suffering and the prohibition to cause widespread, severe and long term damage to the environment. Incalculable human suffering resulting from any use of nuclear weapons is insurmountable.

I am glad the 69th session, adopted a resolution declaring 26th September, a day to commemorate Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

It is of utmost importance that Nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances, and the only way to guarantee this, is through, irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons under effective international control, including through the full implementation of the NPT.

Mr. Chairman,

Uganda underscores the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and supports the international community which has remained committed to promoting the CTBT, a treaty that could serve as threshold for promoting the process of nuclear disarmament and encourages the remaining Annex II countries, in particular, nuclear weapon States and those yet to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to sign and ratify the CTBT. This Treaty is essential for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It is a legally-binding, verifiable means by which to constrain the quantitative and qualitative development of nuclear weapons.

Around the world, people, communities and nations are grappling with a disquieting rise of radicalization and violent extremism, fuelled by identity-based conflicts and cultural and religious tensions. You can imagine the threat if the weapons fell into the hands of non-state actors, in particular terrorist organizations.
Conventional weapons continue to pose a significant threat to peace and security. We must give due attention the scourge of small arms and light weapons and vigorously pursue our common endeavors to reduce armed violence, increase human security and promote sustainable development.

Illegal possession of small arms and light weapons continue to destabilize communities, destroy countless lives and hamper development efforts. The human, social and economic costs demand from us all to strengthen our commitment to curb illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The brutal terrorist attacks by ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Lord’s Resistance Army and Allied Democratic Forces to mention but a few, remind us of the need to strengthen our resolve to address the scourge of illicit trade of small arms and light weapons.

Given today’s globalized and highly interconnected world, it is incumbent upon us and the international community to collectively address the serious challenges facing disarmament and international security.

I thank you.