Statement by

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United Nations General Assembly

70th Session

First Committee

General Debate

New York, 14 October 2015

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Mr Chairman

Firstly, let me congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and assure you of my delegation’s full support throughout this session. Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered by South Africa on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition and with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to add the following remarks in a national capacity.

Ireland regards the work of the First Committee as crucial to the objective of the United Nations and the international community to achieve a more peaceful, secure and prosperous world. 70 years on from the foundation of the United Nations, it is our belief that we must all recommit to the vision of its founders, working together to lay the foundations for a better, more secure future, for all.

Ireland regards the questions which are at the core of this committee’s mandate - disarmament and arms control - as being essential to the achievement of the vision set out in the United Nations Charter, and most recently, to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the face of the complex challenges and humanitarian tragedies which we are witnessing on a daily basis, in so many parts of our world, who can deny that securing genuine and comprehensive disarmament and arms control, across the range of weapons of mass destruction and of conventional weapons, is needed today more than ever?

This year has seen some successes in relation to Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control, evidence of what the international community can achieve when Governments and Civil Society work together in pursuit of common goals. We welcome the agreement reached in relation to Iran’s nuclear programme.
and support the work of the IAEA in regard to its implementation. Equally, we want to highlight the momentum and commitment which led to the early entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty on 24 December last year, and the successful First Meeting of State’s Parties hosted by our fellow NAC member Mexico, in August. On Biological and Chemical Weapons also there have been successes in the last year, with the continued implementation of the programme of destruction of Syria’s stockpiles of chemical weapons. We also welcome the growth in adherence to these Conventions, bringing them ever closer to complete universalization.

Set against these successes, Ireland wishes to highlight the continuing and deeply troubling reports of use of chemical weapons by both State and Non-State Actors in Syria. We also regret the failure of the 2015 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to agree an outcome document. I would like here to reiterate our thanks to the Chairperson of the Review Conference, for her efforts to achieve consensus.

Nevertheless, Ireland takes some positives from the work which was taken forward, both in preparation for, and during, the Review Conference. I refer in particular here to the work carried out by the New Agenda Coalition and other partners in relation to the need to develop legally binding and effective measures to implement Article VI of the NPT Treaty and the great support which we have received from likeminded States and civil society in this respect. It is our view that progress towards Nuclear Disarmament is more urgent than ever, bearing in mind today’s global security challenges. It is our intention to work during this Committee towards the establishment of an open-ended working group in Geneva with a mandate to reach agreement on concrete effective legal
measures. To have meaningful impact, this group should be open to all, not bound by a consensus requirement, and inclusive of civil society.

Mr Chairman

This year, along with the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, the global community has also marked the 70th anniversary of the devastation and human suffering caused by the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, reminding us of the humanitarian imperative which formed the impetus for the great common effort which led to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In this context, we welcome the renewed focus and scrutiny on the Humanitarian consequences of a Nuclear weapons detonation, accidental or deliberate. Great credit is due to Norway, Mexico and Austria for hosting 3 international conferences on the subject of humanitarian consequences and I would also like to acknowledge here the impetus provided by the excellent work of the International Red Cross movement in this regard.

Among the many compelling findings from those conferences was the research on the gendered impact of nuclear explosions, presented in the first instance at the Vienna Conference, and expanded on at a well-attended side event organised by Ireland and other interested States during the NPT Review Conference in May. This research, highlighting that ionising radiation affects women and girls to a far greater degree than men and boys, gives us yet another compelling reason why these weapons should cease to exist.

I said earlier that Ireland is determined to work on the positives from the NPT Review process, while acknowledging the many challenges. As we stated in our closing statement at the Review Conference, Article VI of the Treaty imposes upon each State Party an obligation to enter into and conclude good faith
negotiations that would produce agreed legally binding measures, placing the process of nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control. Today, 80% of the NPT membership subscribes to the position that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to guarantee that such weapons are never used again under any circumstances. The Humanitarian Pledge, now signed by 119 States, represents a further encouraging development. As of this week, a clear majority of the NPT membership has pledged to work towards effective measures to fill the legal gap in Article VI. Again, we believe that the task ahead of us all this month is to build on this pledge and continue the momentum to take this important work forward with the urgency which it requires. I look forward to the formal adoption of the humanitarian pledge as a Resolution.

It is our strong view that the failure of the Review Conference to achieve an outcome needs a pro-active and effective response. The momentum gained from the Humanitarian debate should serve as an impetus, forty-five years on from the Treaty's entry into force, to open the path to full and effective nuclear disarmament, as envisaged by its authors.

Mr Chairman

With regard to developments in Conventional Arms, here too we see some successes but also many challenges. In addition to the welcome progress on the Arms Trade Treaty, we note with concern the ever increasing proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which have been called today's real weapons of mass destruction, fuelling conflicts everywhere, contributing to criminality and gender based violence. We call on those countries who have not signed and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty to do so, and to the State’s parties, to ensure that transparent and effective reporting procedures are adopted at the earliest
moment to ensure the effective implementation of the Treaty.

Ireland strongly supports the UN’s programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, in particular the pursuit of an integrated approach to tackling the significant problems posed by the illicit accumulation and proliferation of these weapons, including the dangers which they pose for humanitarian and peacekeeping interventions.

We welcome and support Sustainable Development Goal 16 (4) which seeks to reduce illicit arms flows by 2030 and will continue to support proposals which seek to integrate and address existing gaps in control of these weapons flows, including through the development of international tracing procedures. Ireland firmly believes that ammunition must also be included in the international community’s control systems for these weapons.

Equally, Ireland continues to support the full implementation and universalisation of the Convention on Conventional Weapons and its Additional Protocols as well as the Mine Ban Treaty and the Cluster Munitions Convention. We welcome the outcome of the Dubrovnik Review Conference and we express our appreciation to Croatia. We are deeply concerned at reports of use of Cluster Munitions in Libya, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen and call on all States to cease use of these inhumane weapons and join the Convention.

Mr Chairman

As technology evolves, so too do the challenges of ensuring that the use of weapons and new technologies, both within and outside conflict situations, remains within the boundaries of international law. Ireland has been pleased to take part in the discussion of Lethal Autonomous Weapons systems at the CCW. We support a strengthened mandate for the CCW to work on and explore this
serious emerging challenge for conventional arms control, with a view to developing positions for the CCW Review Conference in 2016. Likewise, we continue to believe that the use of armed drones, as well as the increasing proliferation of these technologies, requires serious consideration by the international community in relation to the moral, humanitarian and human rights concerns raised by their use.

As with small arms and light weapons, the conflicts we are witnessing today, are seeing an increasing number of casualties and harm being caused by the use of explosive weapons with a wide area impact in populated areas. It is clear to us that the escalating civilian casualty rates, and destruction of civilian infrastructure, arising from their use, present a significant challenge which the international community must address.

Mr Chairman

Ireland recognises that women have been, and continue to be, a powerful force for change in relation to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and we welcome the renewed focus on both women’s empowerment and also on the gendered impact of illicit arms proliferation. It is our view that only through fully empowering and making women visible, in all aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation work, including in relation to the nuclear debate, can the international community reach the goals to which we have all long aspired. 20 years on from the Beijing Platform for Action, and 15 years since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325, it is time for a genuinely equal contribution, by men and women, to the goal of global peace and security.

Thank you

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