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Statement by Mrs. Alice Guitton
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to the Conference on Disarmament
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«OTHER WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION»

Mr Chair,

France aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would, however, like to make some additional remarks from a national perspective.

The issue of “other weapons of mass destruction” is of fundamental importance to my delegation. Current events continue to bear this out.

The situation in Syria remains worrisome. Despite the condemnations of the international community and three Security Council resolutions, chemical weapons attacks have continued repeatedly in 2014 and 2015.

Resolution 2235, establishing a mechanism for investigation into the use of chemical weapons in Syria, is an important development in 2015. France voted in favor of this text and co-sponsored it. Several investigations by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have already confirmed the use of chlorine gas in Syria, but they have not been able to identify those responsible for such attacks as they had no mandate to do so. The investigative mechanism established allows us to entrust that task to a neutral and independent body. To that end, it will work in close coordination with the OPCW. Through the creation of this investigative mechanism, we are working to put an end to impunity and the chemical threat. Those responsible will have to be held accountable.
More generally, recent developments are another demonstration of the urgency of finding a political solution in Syria. It is essential that we all commit to bringing violence to an end, to a rapid resumption of dialogue and of the political process. We therefore fully support the ongoing efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Mr Staffan de Mistura.

Mr Chair,

2015 marks the 90th anniversary of the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. France is the depository of this Protocol, which constitutes the first text aimed at prohibiting the use of these weapons even in wartime. We call for its universalization and the lifting of reservations.

Moreover, France continues to act resolutely in order to maintain the operational capabilities of the Secretary-General’s Mechanism for investigation of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons. A training course for experts of some fifteen nationalities was organized in France in June.

Mr Chair,

This year, we enter into the final phase of the intersessional process of the Biological Weapons Convention, before the 8th Review Conference in 2016. France has been fully committed to seeking innovative and effective solutions, aimed at strengthening transparency and confidence between States Parties in the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention. In particular, we have proposed the creation of a voluntary peer-review mechanism, aimed at enabling collective and participative evaluation of the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention’s provisions by each State Party. France itself submitted to such a review in December 2013 during a pilot exercise involving experts of nine different nationalities. We welcome the announcement by other countries of their intention to do the same prior to the 8th Review Conference.

More broadly, the role of the BWC intersessional process is to allow in-depth work on the implementation of the Convention and to identify consensual elements. The Review Conference should help consolidate these results. To do so, collective work is needed that overcomes the usual divides.
During the meeting of experts in August 2015, France and India jointly submitted a proposal aimed at establishing a database of offers of assistance pursuant to Article VII of the Convention. This operational and concrete proposal has already received favorable echoes and we encourage delegations that so wish to co-sponsor the document ahead of the 8th Review Conference.

Mr Chair,

The issue of delivery systems of weapons of mass destruction is also central. The United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1540, 1887 and 1977, has described the proliferation of missiles capable of carrying weapons of mass destruction as a threat to international peace and security. The Iranian and North Korean ballistic programmes in particular are continuing in violation of these resolutions.

Missile proliferation must be urgently addressed. That is why we must urgently step up our efforts to strengthen multilateral arrangements, including the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCoC), which we would like to see universalized, and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).

Thank you.