FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS' GENERAL ASSEMBLY

DISARMAMENT MACHINERY

28th October 2015

STATEMENT BY PORTUGAL

Delivered by His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Mendonça e Moura,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary,
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations
Mr. Chairman,

We fully align with the statement delivered earlier by the European Union.

Mr. Chairman,

In 1978, the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament established an integrated system of deliberative and negotiation bodies aimed to pursue collective international efforts on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues, key factors to build-up an environment of peace and security for all Nations and Peoples of the world.

In 2015, and since more than a decade, the main parts of this integrated system are clearly failing in accomplishing its respective mandates, for great disappointment of all of us who believe that multilateralism, dialogue and collective political will are crucial and irreplaceable in dealing with all global processes, naturally including the security and disarmament ones.

The world has changed since 1978, concerns and challenges related to security and disarmament issues have not diminished, but the major parts of the UN Machinery for Disarmament have simply not been able to pursue its respective mandates and all persistent efforts of this Assembly to revitalize its functioning and efficiency has proved to be unsuccessful, as of today.

Mr. Chairman,

It is high time we admit reality. The stalemate of the Commission for Disarmament and of the Conference on Disarmament is not only due to procedural-related matters, being largely fed by the prevailing lack of political will.
On the Commission for Disarmament, I would like to commend the strenuous efforts developed by its two more recent Chairs, Ambassador Drobnjak of Croatia and Ambassador Fodé Seck of Senegal. We hope that their efforts aimed to revise the Commission’s methods of work and to enlarge the agenda items for discussion will succeed in the near future.

On other hand, and in what concerns the Conference, it’s crystal clear for us that one of the more basic UN principles – the right of all interested states to be part in all UN fora devoted to global concerns- is being ignored and violated for 16 years as today. It is simply not acceptable anymore that a negotiating body would be reserved for a selected group of few countries, not taking in due account the reiterated, and more than justified, interest of others in becoming Parts.

Mr. Chairman,

As I said, Portugal strongly believes that the pursuit of a solid and perdurable international peace and security environment clearly requires a non-discriminatory and inclusive approach in what concerns international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation international goals and mechanisms.

We urge the Conference on Disarmament to address in a serious and consistent manner its expansion, also respecting, by doing so, its own rules of procedure, Rule 1.nº2, to name it. We regret that the appointment of a Special Rapporteur tasked to examine the enlargement modalities of the CD without any prejudice to the outcome has not taken place yet. At this regard, we are grateful to the efforts developed by a number of States who assumed the rotated Presidency of the CD, more recently Mexico and Netherlands.
Mr. Chairman,

In the current context of the CD, marked by a long-lasted deadlock, a concrete decision on membership could also provide a fresh impetus to the whole internal process. It would demonstrate that the CD is still able to reach consensus, giving answers to the requests of membership from States who, by doing so, are stating how they value the Conference as the dedicated UN forum for broad disarmament negotiations. The fact that numerous States continue to affirm its interest in joining the CD should be seen, and adequately considered, as a precious and timely political statement in support to the Conference's role.

At this stage the CD seriously-risks being known for its long-lasted inability to accomplish its mandate, rather than for its past achievements. The credibility of the Conference is clearly challenged by its immobility and ineffective ritual functioning. This situation can endanger the perception of the Conference as the sole UN body devoted to negotiating international disarmament instruments. This situation, Mr. Chairman, if not consistently addressed, risks opening the way for discussions on alternative or parallel ways.

Let's be clear, Portugal is not in favour of circumventing existing bodies, but we also strongly believe that those bodies should respond, efficiently and in an inclusive manner, to the needs and responsibilities they are entitled to address and assume.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, I would like to commend the very valuable work developed by UNODA in assisting States in pursuing the multilateral
I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

whose very able leadership is being furthered by Mr. Kim Won-soo.

disarmament agenda, and to salute its former Head, Ms. Angela Kane