Mr Chairman,

My delegation congratulates you on your election as chair of this First Committee, and wishes you every success in this important task.

France aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, and would like to present the following additional remarks in a national capacity.

Mr Chairman, dear colleagues,

As our work begins, France considers it essential to restore a shared understanding of the goals that we have the responsibility to pursue together. These goals are closely intertwined: they involve strengthening international peace, stability and security and, to this end, establishing a substantial and realistic disarmament agenda for the benefit of all.

Yet, as everyone here knows, the world around us is striking in its complex, threatening and uncertain nature. The fact that the international environment has become more unpredictable and less cooperative, means that, in our view, efforts are all the more necessary to address, in a coherent and comprehensive approach, the issues of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament.
As such, we are under no illusions: these different issues cannot be treated in isolation. Together, these issues contribute to the vital foundation of any progress towards a safer world: the seeking of better mutual understanding and confidence, progress on the road to reciprocity of measures taken and their effective verification, and full acknowledgment of the fact that the need for effort in one area must not lead to an arms race in another.

The current situation also requires us to be clear-sighted: any attempt to move forward while ignoring strategic balances and their factors, or which dismisses regional and national interests, is bound to fail. [Without the participation and consent of all parties, the commitments that have been made cannot be effectively implemented]. That means [simply] that nothing concrete can be effectively achieved if we deny or ignore reality. It also means that only the demanding avenue of seeking consensus, as well as the universalization of the measures adopted can bring about effective results.

This approach is pivotal to the multilateralism that France remains determined to promote, as recently demonstrated by bringing together the international community in Paris to agree on substantial commitments during COP21.

[It is with this clear ambition to make a difference in the real world that France intends to contribute actively to our debates.]

Mr Chairman,

Proliferation risks remain serious and require a firm response from the international community.

The increasing number of irresponsible, unjustifiable and destabilizing acts by North Korea, particularly the nuclear tests on 6 January and 9 September this year, is particularly worrying. Above all, it demonstrates North Korea's determination to obtain a nuclear and ballistic arsenal, in flagrant violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions. The threat North Korea's provocations represent is a problem for us all: Pyongyang is defying our security architecture by undermining the non-proliferation regime. To deal with the development of proliferation programmes, we must not stay silent. We cannot allow them to become commonplace.

In this respect, it is essential for us to respond firmly, particularly through UN sanctions. Sanctions are not an end in themselves, but they are an essential means of achieving our collective goal of denuclearizing the Korean peninsula, a prerequisite for resuming six-party talks. North Korea has chosen isolation, and must bear the consequences.
The case of Iran shows that the determination of the international community can help bring about solutions to the proliferation crises. The international community, and the E3/EU+3 group in particular, will continue to monitor Iran's implementation of its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with all the necessary vigilance, in order to manage the Iranian nuclear programme in the long term. The acceleration of the ballistic missile programme, and particularly the short- and medium-range missile launches, remains a subject of acute concern for France.

The joint investigation mechanism (JIM) report has helped identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The mechanism's conclusions are alarming: out of the nine cases studied, two are attributable with certainty to the Syrian authorities, and a third to Daesh. This new information comes on top of the many difficulties the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is encountering, faced with the lack of transparency of the Syrian authorities on their chemical weapons programme.

These weapons are prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which Syria ratified in 2013, joining 192 other States. The use of these inhumane weapons is unacceptable in the 21st century, and cannot be justified. The undermining of an international non-proliferation regime by a State must give rise to the necessary sanctions. The use of these same weapons by Daesh is equally unacceptable, and has to be the subject of major mobilization by our institutions, particularly the OPCW.

On another point, France, along with Germany, intends to once again this year submit a resolution on preventing the acquisition by terrorists of radioactive sources. We need to remain mobilized to prevent the serious radiological consequences that misuse of certain radioactive sources for terrorist purposes could have.

Mr Chairman,

To tackle these threats, and to address the more general security challenges that are posed today, the various international regimes that we have patiently built together over the last few decades have to be preserved and fully implemented.

The integrity of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) across its three pillars must be guaranteed. The obligations and safeguards pursuant to the NPT are irreplaceable, and it would be a mistake to read reasons for doubt as to its credibility or effectiveness into the inconclusive outcome of the 2015 Review Conference. France will thus vigorously oppose any attempt to
weaken the non-proliferation regime through the promotion of a **treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons**. Let us be clear: we would be deluding ourselves if we believed that such a treaty, designed without the nuclear-weapon possessing States, could have the slightest concrete impact, particularly on the reduction of arsenals.

Indeed, we **will not achieve a safer world by ignoring the role of deterrence policies and the security context in which they play their part**. Nor will spreading doubt as to the scope of the obligations already incumbent upon nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States under **Article VI** of the NPT, or seeking in vain to substitute the humanitarian approach for security concerns, effectively bring about the next steps in the nuclear disarmament process, as agreed by consensus under the **2010 Action Plan**.

As such, the entry into force on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (**CTBT**), which was opened for signature 20 years ago this year, is a priority for France in the field of nuclear disarmament. On 23 September 2016, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution calling upon all States to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay, to abstain from carrying out any nuclear explosions, and to maintain their moratorium until the entry into force of the Treaty.

The launch of negotiations for the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (**FMCT**) is also, in our view, a priority and the next logical step in nuclear disarmament.

Similarly, and because **nuclear disarmament is measured first and foremost by actions**, my country will continue to encourage its partners to follow its example in terms of both **transparency** concerning its forces and facilities, and concrete disarmament measures. [France, whose deterrence policy is strictly defensive, thus applies the principle of strict sufficiency compatible with the strategic context, and currently maintains its arsenal at its lowest level.]

It is also important to consolidate the US-Russia arms control agreement. In this respect, we are counting on the US and on Russia to renew their commitments aimed at reducing their strategic arsenals from 2021 and following the expiry of the New Start treaty.

My country also calls today upon all countries to fully participate in the preparation of the **next NPT review cycle** which will begin next year. France is committed to contributing actively. **We will thus be hosting the next P5 conference in Paris in spring 2017**, with the aim of deepening collaboration between nuclear-weapon States and opening up further the P5 group to dialogue with non-nuclear-weapon States, whose expectations must be heard. That is one of the reasons why France has decided to participate actively in the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV).
I would like to stress this point: **only constructive, open dialogue can help us move forward.** Nothing positive can be expected from the growing trend towards circumventing the machinery of disarmament and hardening divisions, as observed this year in the course of the work of the OEWG on nuclear disarmament, [of which the bias towards prohibition and stigmatization was sadly clear from the outset.]

Therefore France calls all parties to **return to the traditional, legitimate forums for disarmament, where deadlocks have gone on too long.** [On the four core issues of the Conference on Disarmament and on new proposals, the possibility provided by SSOD-1 to hold structured technical discussions, which are essential to pave the way for the launch of negotiations, has not been, in our view, sufficiently explored so far.]

Mr Chairman,

In this second half of 2016, we will have the opportunity to work together to **enhance the effectiveness of several important international instruments.** [The BTWC and CCW Review Conferences, where universalization remains a key issue, should allow for the adoption of tangible, pragmatic measures for progress, which are essential to adapt these instruments to today's challenges.]

As regards the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), France considers that work in several areas offers reasonable prospects for progress: establishment of a substantial intersessional process,[ review of progress in science and technology, and constructive dialogue on the challenges of implementation and assistance and cooperation.] The practical proposals put forward by my country, particularly with India under Article VII, or in cooperation with other countries, on a voluntary basis, as part of the peer review process, have been designed precisely to advance debate and build confidence between States Parties. We hope they will be appreciated in this light.

Regarding the CCW, the lively debates on the main subjects on its agenda are encouraging. It is particularly positive to see that the question of **lethal autonomous weapons systems,** raised by France in 2013, is gradually reaching maturity. [We hope that a group of governmental experts will be created at the December Review Conference to continue discussions on this subject.]

[The issue of transparency is also central in the field of delivery systems. That is why my country provides prior notification of all its ballistic missile tests and launches, in accordance with the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC). France welcomes India's
recent accession and calls upon all countries that have not yet signed the Code, which is currently the only universal instrument to combat the proliferation of ballistic missiles, to do so.]

Lastly, the goal of preventing an arms race in space remains essential. The huge number of peaceful applications of space, and the need to guarantee universal access to it, mean we have to establish targeted confidence-building and transparency measures to create the conditions for the sustainability of space activities.

Mr Chairman,

At a time when the terrorist threat and the inherent dangers of the illicit spread of weapons weigh on the security of people in all regions of the world, France considers it essential to renew the priority devoted to the issues of conventional arms control. My country has thus stepped up its engagement in the implementation of several major work areas:

- Firstly, the universalization and full implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The success of the second Conference of States Parties in August 2016 has to be an encouragement to take certain substantive issues into greater depth, including with civil society support.

- More generally, greater political mobilization from the whole international community to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) which, I must stress, kill more people every year than any other sort of weapon in the world, appears essential to us. I will come back to this later in the debate.

- Similarly, we need to pursue the implementation of the Oslo and Ottawa Conventions. In this respect, I would like to underline that France, for its part, has proceeded with the destruction of its stockpiles of cluster munitions, two years in advance of the deadline set by the Convention.

- Lastly, an effort is needed to better structure and coordinate the international response to the serious threats posed by improvised explosive devices. [It is in this spirit that France has worked to facilitate the adoption by consensus of a political declaration on these devices under the CCW and also intends to take part in monitoring this issue at the United Nations General Assembly.]
Mr Chairman, dear colleagues,

I would like to conclude briefly by stressing once more the three priorities of France's involvement in our debate this year: anchoring our efforts in the real world; consolidating existing legal regimes by seeking tangible, pragmatic progress; and restoring effective multilateral practices, through dialogue and consensus-seeking.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.