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STATEMENT BY

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on the occasion of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly,
1st Committee

Debate on the Disarmament Machinery

NEW YORK, 25 October 2016
Chairperson,

Thank you for giving me the floor. The Netherlands aligns itself with the EU statement and would like to make additional remarks in its national capacity.

After general elections earlier this year in the Netherlands, our new government is ready to start its work this week, on the basis of a multi-party coalition agreement. In its foreign affairs chapter, the agreement states that ‘the world has never been so prosperous and developed as today. However, further progress is at stake. [...] International cooperation is under pressure.’ With this in mind, the Netherlands will continue its staunch support for the rules-based global order, with a focus on proven partnerships, amongst others with the UN. In today’s geopolitical and security environment, sound global governance is key, and hence also a sound disarmament machinery.

Chairperson,

The First Committee serves as an important annual forum to give guidance to our work on disarmament and international security. The presence of all UN Member States, international and regional organisations and the active participation of civil society is required for its legitimacy. Apart from providing a platform for Member States to voice their national positions, it is important that dialogue is facilitated in order to create space to listen to each other’s arguments, bring positions closer and to effectively build bridges. This will be a first step in revitalising the disarmament machinery.

The Conference on Disarmament (CD) remains the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, as the First Special Session on Disarmament in 1978 intended for the predecessor of the CD. In our attempts to revitalise the disarmament machinery, the Netherlands feels that we do not need to change this aspect. However, as new technologies – or the so-called frontier issues – impact on peace and security, we need to adapt our machinery so it is fit to deal with these new potential threats. This means flexibility on the scope of 1) what the outcome of negotiations in the CD should be and 2) on issues that are addressed. SSOD I does not speak of ‘legally binding treaties’ as the ultimate outcome. It refers to disarmament measures. In view of technological developments that have a dual use nature, such as those in cyber and outer space and the impact of artificial intelligence on weapon systems, we should be flexible on considering measures – in the broadest sense of the word, such as developing norms, principles, guidelines or codes of conduct to govern multilateral disarmament and security issues. We further need to broaden involvement of different stakeholders to adjust to today’s world, which means 1) universalisation and 2) involving civil society. The Netherlands therefore welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General of the CD, Michael Møller, to organise the next Civil Society Forum in 2018. In the context of the revitalisation of the disarmament machinery, the Netherlands is keen to see these issues addressed more fundamentally at the SSOD IV.

The Netherlands does not share the view of those who believe that because of the CD’s impasse, work in this forum should be ceased. The Netherlands saw merit in the substantive discussions that took place in the Way Ahead Working Group under the able chairmanship of ambassador Htin Lynn of Myanmar. The Netherlands would also like to thank the facilitators for their efforts. We were getting closer to agreeing on recommendations on a Programme of Work. In particular, we welcomed the flexibility shown by some states with regard to the commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Material (Cut off) Treaty. The Netherlands continues to attach great importance to an FMCT as an important step toward disarmament, the negotiation of which can and should commence without delay. The work of the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group, which the Netherlands proudly co-sponsored with Canada and Germany, will help further set the stage for negotiations. The Netherlands and many other states have been flexible on other core agenda items of the CD. We call upon all states to show the utmost flexibility in moving this forum towards negotiations. The question on the table is ‘what can you offer?’ instead of ‘what do you want?’ – as ambassador Lynn rightfully phrased.
Chairperson,

The Netherlands is encouraged to see the **UN Disarmament Commission** agree this year on recommendations in the field of conventional disarmament and is keen to see this positive development extended to the other agenda items of this body.

The **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research** (UNIDIR) is an important autonomous institute to generate ideas and to promote action on disarmament and international security issues. The Netherlands is supporting multiple strands of work of the institute so that it can feed into our deliberations and, inevitably, negotiations.

In conclusion, for a sound disarmament machinery, a sound **financial system** underpinning the Geneva-based Conventions and Treaties is key. Although the payment discipline of states parties has increased over the past year, the conventions continue to be in financial trouble. We therefore need to make additional efforts towards improving the efficiency of the contribution process, discouraging non-payment and reducing the costs of meetings.

Thank you.