Chair,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the following countries: Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belize, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, Montenegro, Namibia, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, South Africa, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, Zambia, and my own country, Canada.

Among the key purposes of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security. The disarmament machinery that has evolved over the seventy plus years of the UN’s existence was intended to achieve this purpose. To this end, the machinery has worked well, or poorly, sometimes due to external events, but always, always as a reflection of the level of political will of its member states. Where member states engage, and agree on a course of action, we have progress.

While the disarmament machinery has delivered in the past, success has been elusive for many years. The structure has atrophied and even the discussions have grown stale and repetitive. Among the ways in which the disarmament machinery has fallen short, is in its tepid acceptance of the importance of gender inclusiveness and gendered impacts. If we accept that maintenance of international peace and security is a task that should be shared equally by all states, a basic principle in multilateral disarmament, than we should also recognize that pursuit of that goal should be equally shared when it comes to the representation and participation of women in the disarmament machinery.
International organizations need to represent society at large, and the way disarmament issues are treated and discussed is affected by who participates in the discussion.

Similarly, when looking at some of the key issues which are addressed through the machinery, such as nuclear weapons, anti-personnel landmines or the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, we need to incorporate and reflect the undeniable body of evidence concerning the differentiated gender impact of many of these weapons. To take but one example, the proliferation and unlawful use of small arms and light weapons can contribute to conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. Improving gender aspects in disarmament is definitely not a “soft” issue. In this light, we welcome the inclusion of gender perspectives in a number of First Committee resolutions this fall. Much more can be done, and we encourage all lead sponsors to adopt the same comprehensive approach to their resolutions by assessing its gender dimensions.

This is not just a question for the First Committee. Outcome documents from meetings of states parties should also seek to capture gender perspectives. To go even further, we believe that all disarmament instruments should include gender perspectives.

Our states are committed to assist the disarmament machinery to function efficiently and effectively, in the interests of all states and all persons. We also commit to work towards having a balanced representation of men and women in the disarmament machinery, and to making gender perspectives an everyday part of its discussions and documents, so that, what started as a norm, becomes just - the normal.

Thank you.