Statement by Finland in the General Debate  
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Statement by

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Mr. Chairman,

As my Delegation takes the floor for the first time, I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as the Chairman of the First Committee. Let me commend your able leadership and assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

I addition to the statements by the European Union and the Nordic countries, let me deliver some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

We are having the First Committee general debate against the backdrop of intensified international tension.

The DPRK's dangerous and irresponsible actions constitute an acute threat to regional and international peace and security. Finland condemns the DPRK's nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches, which are grave violations of its international obligations and multiple UN Security Council resolutions. Once again, we urge DPRK to completely and irreversibly abandon its illegal nuclear and missile programs and to comply with its international obligations.

We commend the UN Security Council for its leadership and unanimous approach in efforts to solve the threatening situation caused by the DPRK. We urge all nations to fully implement all the decisions by the UNSC, including the resolution 2375.

The recent actions by the DPRK highlight the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its verification and monitoring mechanisms. We call upon DPRK and other states to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay. The world and its inhabitants deserve a complete ban on nuclear weapon tests.

We welcome the ongoing implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and call on all parties to the JCPOA to implement it in full.

Mr. Chairman,

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime. It is the essential foundation for nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the Treaty. Finland emphases all three pillars of the NPT. Our approach to nuclear disarmament is pragmatic and we recognize that this is a gradual process.

A world free of nuclear weapons must be our objective. In order to achieve that, we have to proceed in a unified and inclusive way. All the countries possessing nuclear weapons have to be on board. We reiterate our call on all nuclear weapon states and countries possessing these weapons to promptly take concrete actions in nuclear disarmament and confidence building.

We are especially concerned about the thousands of tactical nuclear weapons stationed in Europe, in our close vicinity. Today these weapons are not covered by any binding, verifiable agreement. This gap has to
be covered. There should also be a clear division between these and conventional weapons – in military doctrines and in exercises. And finally, we need practical confidence-building measures in this field as well. Finland is hosting a side-event on possible arms control measures concerning tactical nuclear weapons at lunch time on October 10th and wish you all welcome to our event.

Mr. Chairman,

The possibility of non-state actors and terrorist groups getting hold of biological, chemical, nuclear or radiological weapons constitutes a real threat to societies. As a consequence, international cooperation in the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 1540 is increasingly relevant.

In order to prevent terrorism, it is also important to build prevention capacity on a global level. Finnish experts have been training chemists from over 130 developing countries in chemical weapons verification. In addition we are building bio- and health security capacity as well as enhancing nuclear security and safety worldwide. Currently Ambassador Jari Luoto of Finland holds the position of international coordinator in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, which is a practical cooperation initiative with 88 countries and five international observer organizations participating.

Mr. Chairman,

The UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism has determined that the Syrian Arab Republic and Da‘esh have used chemical weapons in Syria. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, be it a State or a non-State actor, anywhere, anytime and under any circumstances is clearly contrary to international law and those responsible must be held accountable.

As a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Syrian Arab Republic has explicitly obligated itself not to possess, develop or use chemical weapons. We urge the government of Syria to extend full cooperation to the OPCW to resolve all outstanding issues and finally destroy its chemical weapons programme completely and irreversibly.

We want to achieve full universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We once again call upon the DPRK, Egypt, Israel and South Sudan to join the Convention without delay, thus contributing to the goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Conventional arms and explosives kill over half a million people every year. We need to pay more attention to small arms and other conventional weapons in order to reduce the tragic consequences of their use. In recent years, one of the bright spots has been the Arms Trade Treaty. The Treaty will step up regulation of international flows of conventional arms. As the previous President of the ATT, Finland has emphasized the universalization and strengthened implementation of the Treaty. We are grateful for the support that we received from governments and the civil society in our work.

The Arms Trade Treaty does not operate in a vacuum. As we meet, many fundamentals of international security are under pressure. In different parts of the world, countries rely more on force than on international rules and peaceful cooperation.
We need this Treaty. It supports human rights and humanitarian law. It promotes transparency and confidence-building. It provides common ground for the defence industry. ATT has established a necessary norm at a global level.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to conclude by a reminder of how new technology is changing the global political environment. Science and technology, internet, social media, space and cyber technology, and artificial intelligence have immense positive impact on life everywhere.

At the same time we need to look seriously into how these affect international security and arms control. The development of lethal autonomous weapons opens up a totally new perspective on warfare. This poses difficult questions about ethics, regulation and international rules.

We also need to be sufficiently prepared for new kind of hybrid threats. Legislation, regulation and rules of the game are urgently needed. We have to engage not only governments and the political leadership but also the private sector and academia.

It is crucial to create a safe and secure environment where we can profit from the advancing technology – without putting ourselves or our societies at risk.

Thank you