Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of Sri Lanka wishes to join all other delegations in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

We commence deliberations of the First Committee this year, amidst the escalating tensions in the Korean Peninsula and an increasing number of violent conflicts around the world.

This has led to innumerable loss of life, displacement, violence against civilians and significant decrease in human living standards. The effects of these tensions and conflicts have spilled beyond borders and poses a significant challenge to our efforts in reducing “all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere”.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear weapons pose one of the greatest threats to humanity. Their testing and use can result in catastrophic consequences to life on this planet. It has the capacity to not only destroy all forms of life but also human memory and civilization.

The risk of these consequences will remain as long as nuclear weapons exist. It is especially grave given the risk of accidental, mistaken or unauthorized use. Such weapons are also a threat given the vulnerability of command and control, technical failures, human errors and cyber-attacks. The danger of these weapons falling into terrorist hands could lead to unthinkable consequences.

Nuclear weapons by nature are inhumane and indiscriminate and their use violates the cardinal principles of international humanitarian law. Any use of nuclear weapons would be abhorrent to the principles of humanity and the dictates of public conscience.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka has a long record of opposition to nuclear weapons. It has been among the first States to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996. We were unequivocal in our
support for the Resolution adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons this year and are committed to global efforts on the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Sri Lanka firmly believes that the international treaty framework, remains the most effective and legally binding means to address the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. President,

The increase in violent conflicts around the world and the rising cost of human life, calls for an even more concerted effort on our part to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. These Arms, continue to fuel conflicts and cause suffering to thousands, the danger they pose augmented by the ease in which they may be used, especially in the hands of non-state actors.

Sri Lanka has experienced a decades old conflict in the past and the accompanying senseless destruction that Small Arms and Light Weapons could cause. We are signatory to the UN Programme of Action to Combat the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Aspects. Sri Lanka established a National Commission against the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms to address the proliferation of such weapons in the country.
While agreeing in principle with international measures to address the issue of proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, it is important to ensure that any measure taken by the UN and its Member States to address this issue, do not affect the rights of States to legally procure and hold weapons for its self defence and safety of its citizens.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka advocates that outer space is part of the common heritage of humanity and there should be equal opportunity to explore and utilize it for peaceful purposes, for common benefit of mankind.

However, all parties have a responsibility to ensure that outer space is free from conflict. It is imperative that we prevent any militarization and potential weaponization of space, as it could undermine international security, disrupt existing arms control instruments, in particular those related to nuclear weapons and adversely impact global stability. In order to address this issue, we believe that the existing legal framework on Outer Space should be strengthened to meet current challenges and threats.
Mr. Chairman,

The First Committee debate also provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon the multilateral disarmament machinery, which play an important role complementing and promoting the global agenda for peace and disarmament.

It is a cause for concern that certain mechanisms have failed to produce fruitful outcomes. The stagnation of the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum for the international community and the failure by the UN Disarmament Commission to produce any tangible outcome, puts at risk global efforts towards reaching consensus on disarmament. This failure to find common ground for a way forward on disarmament deserves serious thought from Member States.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka reiterates the need for urgent and collective global action for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the peaceful use of Outer Space. There is a dire need to enhance coordination of global efforts to combat the threats posed to international security by these weapons and reach consensus on disarmament. To this end, my delegation looks forward to constructive deliberations at this Session of the First Committee.

Thank you.