STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. GEORGI PANAYOTOV, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BULGARIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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Mr. Chair,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you, as well as the other members of the Bureau, on the assumption of the chairmanship of this year’s session of the First Committee. You can count of the full support of my delegation in your efforts to steer the deliberations to a successful end. I take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Sabri Boukadoum of Algeria, for his leadership during the work of the Committee at the 71st session of the General Assembly.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union on 2 October, now I would like to highlight a few points of particular importance to my country.

Mr. Chair, the focus of work of the First Committee is disarmament and international security, however, we commence our deliberations in particularly challenging times both for disarmament, as well as international security.

The repeated nuclear and ballistic tests conducted by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in defiance of all relevant UN Security Council resolutions are a cause of serious concern. DPRK’s behavior is a threat not only to the Korean peninsula and the region but also constitutes a threat to global peace and security. We call upon the DPRK to stop once and for all its nuclear and ballistic programs in a complete, irreversible and verifiable manner and to engage in a constructive dialogue with the international community in order to reach a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear program concluded in July 2015 remains of historic significance. It is a proof that even a very complex issue can be resolved via diplomatic means. Its full implementation
is of great importance for regional and global stability and we encourage all parties to the JCPOA to continue to strictly abide by its terms.

Bulgaria remains fully committed to the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons. However, by simply prohibiting them, this objective will not be met. We firmly believe that any advance in nuclear disarmament is only possible within the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and namely Article VI. The NPT remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the framework for nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Our efforts should be aimed at a constructive and realistic, gradual approach, based on practical and implementable measures, building blocks that will strengthen the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Such practical steps include bringing into force the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, overcoming the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, including through its enlargement; starting negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).

Mr. Chair,

Another serious cause of concern for my country and for the international community is the fact that despite being outlawed, chemical weapons are still being used to kill people, as demonstrated in the reports coming from Syria. Bulgaria condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons. Such actions should not be left without consequences and all perpetrators should be held accountable. To this end, we fully support the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission. It is our common responsibility not to let a norm against the use of such weapons erode.

While it is regrettable that consensus was not possible at the BWC Review Conference, we are convinced that the treaty needs further strengthening and my country remains committed to work towards this end. We expect that a substantive intersessional work program will be agreed upon at the next Meeting of States Parties.

Mr. Chair,

The area of conventional weapons also merits attention. For my country advancing in this area is of high priority.

Bulgaria is firmly committed to the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty as well as to its full implementation. As a member of the Bureau of the Third Conference of States Parties, we have worked and will continue to work hard for its promotion. By setting an international norm on responsible trade in arms, the
ATT has an important role to play in preventing atrocities, curbing terrorism and promoting international security.

The upcoming 2018 Third Review Conference on the United Nations Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons also provides us with an opportunity to strengthen the global regime against the illicit trade in SALW and to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and we should not miss it.

Mr. Chair,

The emerging new threats, such as the vulnerability of cyberspace, require our immediate attention. We do need new rules to respond to the new challenges. In this regard, Bulgaria supports the development of international principles and norms for responsible behavior in cyberspace.

Mr. Chair,

Let me conclude on a positive note. This year has also seen some encouraging developments. The consensus reached in the United Nations Disarmament Commission on Recommendations on Practical Confidence-Building Measures in the Field of Conventional Weapons after an impasse of 18 years, as well as the consensus outcome of the working group on SSOD-IV, demonstrate that member states can work together and reach consensual outcome even on divisive issues.

Thank you!