STATEMENT

by

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

FIRST COMMITTEE – GENERAL DEBATE

NEW YORK, 17 OCTOBER 2018
Mr. Chairman,

I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating you and other members of the Bureau on the election to your respective posts. I assure you of the full support of my delegation in the discharge your important duties.

In the last several years, we have witnessed dynamic shifts and turns in the global security environment. Problems and challenges facing the international community in a world of rising interdependence and complexity are being multiplied and made ever more intertwined. The issues, therefore, related to weapons control, disarmament and non-proliferation are becoming ever more important and the topics we have been discussing these days ever more relevant.

Regrettably, we can see that, today, we are still miles away from our principal goal of a world without nuclear weapons. WMD proliferation and modernization, particularly of nuclear weapons, present serious challenges to international peace and stability and make the process of sustainable development ever more difficult to achieve. What we need is unity in our endeavours to build a safe and more secure world and the first and right step in that direction is the respect of the existing international principles and norms in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and weapons control. In this regard, we join the Secretary-General's call for all states to work together to achieve concrete, verifiable and irreversible steps to prepare for a world without nuclear weapons.

Let me remind you that Serbia has acceded to all key international instruments in this area. We consider the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be the cornerstone of international security and the pillar of the international non-proliferation regime and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. We hope that the dynamic discussions within this year's session of the First Committee will serve as a solid basis in preparations for the upcoming 2020 NPT Review Conference.

As a country which ratified the CTBT in 2004, Serbia joins the group of countries that strongly support its universal implementation at the soonest possible time. In this context we welcome Thailand's ratification of the CTBT. CTBTO has, in several occasions, demonstrated its invaluable role in quickly providing reliable and independent data, something that no single country alone could do. We believe its Verification Mechanism to be an effective instrument for preventing and discouraging nuclear weapons development and proliferation.

Like the rest of the international community, we have been carefully following the recent developments in the Korean Peninsula. The positive steps undertaken this year give us hope that progress could be achieved in finding a comprehensive, peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to achieve peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

With regard to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), we remain convinced that it represents a significant achievement of multilateralism. We hope that despite the uncertainties that JCPOA is currently facing, all stakeholders will continue to make every possible effort to address the challenges and thus contribute to this vital issue of the global non-proliferation architecture.

The Republic of Serbia remains fully committed to the common goals of non-proliferation and disarmament. We continue to make efforts to improve our safety
legislation, with an aim to meet internationally recognized security requirements and to implement all obligations under relevant international documents and conventions, especially in the non-proliferation field.

In that respect, allow me to highlight a few recent concrete steps undertaken by my country in order to enhance the non-proliferation regime in all its aspects. The Parliament of the Republic of Serbia has ratified the Amendments to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material in March 2016. This ratification has paved the way for global entry into force of the Amendments to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) — which we strongly welcome. Furthermore, the Convention on Nuclear Safety, as well as the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management have been ratified by our national Parliament last year. This year Additional protocol to the Safeguard Agreement with IAEA was also ratified.

In addressing the proliferation risk posed by non-State actors, Serbia continues to attach great importance to the compliance with the provisions of UNSCR 1540 (2004). Based on the recommendations and outcomes of the 1540 Comprehensive Review Process, at the beginning of this year the Republic of Serbia has adopted its Second National Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1540 for the period 2018-2022 and established its inter-agency working group for the implementation of the Plan.

Furthermore, other multilateral agreements in the area of non-proliferation of WMDs, such as the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) continue to make a vast contribution to the prevention and elimination of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. At a time of great risks of proliferation, it is in all of our best interests to preserve those important multilateral agreements in order to guarantee our collective safety and security and ensure their full and effective implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

Illicit trade in conventional weapons continues to threaten regional and international security and stability and to affect the lives of millions of people all over the world. To counter this phenomenon and its consequences, Serbia continues to actively support a global implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

We believe that a regional approach to cooperation in the field of arms export control, including cooperation in compliance with ATT obligations, is of paramount importance. In that context, the countries of the Western Balkans have established an effective regional cooperation mechanism in the field of small arms and light weapons export control (Centre for Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeast Europe), the contribution of which to regional confidence-building, transfer of knowledge and best practices and information exchange is trailblazing indeed.

Furthermore, during the London Summit in July, a Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024 was adopted. Currently, We are in the process of drafting the National Action Plan, according to the Roadmap.

Serbia, also, welcomes the outcome document of the Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW, which
can help protect the most vulnerable members of the society from illicit flows of SALW and thus help advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman,

Last but not least, I would like to address, in a few words, the calls made with regard to the importance and the need to “re-activate” the Disarmament Conference (CD) at Geneva as the main negotiating body in this area. It is my country’s earnest hope that the CD States Parties will finally consider another substantial issue of special importance for my country: the expansion of CD membership. There is an urgent need for the expansion because the issues on the CD agenda are of paramount importance for a much larger number of countries than the current 65 CD member States. They are universal in nature and should be discussed and negotiated on a non-discriminatory, transparent and multilateral basis and each country should be given an opportunity to participate in the process and assume its part of responsibility. A clear political will is necessary in order to overcome the current stalemate and re-start serious discussion of the substantive issues and make a credible contribution to international peace and security. To that end, Serbia stands ready to make its own active contribution.