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First Committee - Disarmament Machinery

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Check against delivery

Mr/ Madam Chair

We are getting to the stage of First Committee where we are a little weary of statements. Most of us have delivered substantive messages under various clusters, and the temptation is not to speak during this session.

It is important that we do. The UN disarmament machinery is our framework for discussing, negotiating, and agreeing on critical international security issues.
It is essential that it is fit for purpose – that it is an effective toolbox to navigate an increasingly complex multipolar world.

Dialogue which builds trust has never been more important.

We are encouraged by some developments in the disarmament machinery this year.

The Conference on Disarmament was able to agree by consensus reports from four subsidiary bodies. This significant achievement is more
than the CD has been able to do in years. We should build on this in 2019. It reflects intensive dialogue in five subsidiary bodies – and a willingness by member states to engage, and deepen our understanding of each other’s positions. The involvement of experts added value. We thank the subsidiary body coordinators, UNODA, and UNIDIR for their support.

Similarly, the UN Disarmament Commission, which Australia had the honour to chair this year, enjoyed the quickest agenda adoption since 2006. It successfully launched working groups on Nuclear Risk Reduction and Outer Space Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures, and has a solid foundation to build towards an outcome in 2020. We are hopeful that the UNDC and CD increase their coordination as a matter of practice.

Of concern, however, is the funding crisis in the Geneva-based arms control conventions. To maintain and strengthen these conventions, we need to be able to hold effective meetings, and have implementation support. The key problem is that some states do not pay their contributions on time, or at all. This situation is not sustainable or fair for those who do.

Mr/Madam Chair

Some of the achievements mentioned above appear modest, but this undersells how difficult it is to build consensus.

We welcome the Secretary-General’s thinking on the disarmament machinery and partnerships in his Agenda for Disarmament.

We are convinced that one of the most impactful contributions we can make to the disarmament machinery is to build diversity.
Our impetus to bring more women into the fold of international security is so much more than altruism. Diversity in a room of decision-makers leads to better decisions.

We need to build the pipeline of young, dynamic, creative, innovative women and men who see themselves with a career in maintaining and strengthening international peace and security.

I would like to introduce Hayley Keen – sitting behind me. Hayley is an intern at the Australian mission helping with first committee. Many of you may have met her asking you to co-sponsor the CTBT resolution (and we encourage you to do so). But more importantly, Hayley like others in the room is at the start of her career – and will soon be making choices about whether international security is a field where she feels she can make a contribution that will be valued.

As experienced delegates, we have a responsibility to mentor and encourage colleagues like Hayley. We need to grow our talent.

Visible role models are important. Several studies have found that women benefit from role models of their own gender much more than men do, particularly when those role models are associated with study or work.

We live at a time when our youngest generation is growing up, having seen strong women increasingly embedded in the global international security framework. This is a good thing – but we can and should do more to normalise the contribution of women to international security.

Thank you.