General Statement

on the occasion of the opening of the First Committee

of the 73rd UN General Assembly

Delivered by Rüdiger Bohn

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Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of Germany, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I assure you of Germany’s utmost support for your work!

Germany fully aligns itself with the statements delivered by the EU.

Distinguished Mr. Chairman, distinguished colleagues,

1. A world safer, wealthier and freer than any generation had witnessed before us … some say that’s where we stand: We have better access to education, poverty has been reduced significantly and the number of electoral democracies is at an all-time high. Shouldn’t we have reason to be satisfied and compliment each other?

2. Well, in spite of many positive developments over the past decades, we unfortunately need to diagnose: still too many places are not enjoying peace; still too many people mourn the death of their beloved; still too many tensions exist across the globe. In other words: we have yet in front of us a long path to walk in order to really make this world a place worth living for each and every one.
3. What is more, these overall positive developments could go into reverse as international security currently seems to be at a turning point: tensions rise in virtually every corner of the world; long running and deadly conflicts remain deadlocked; international agreements such as the Chemical Weapons Convention come increasingly under pressure, as fundamental non-use norms are being violated both in conflict zones and peaceful communities.

4. We should constantly remind ourselves of what is at stake if we did not preserve and strengthen the existing arms control architecture including its norms against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Fifty years ago, one of these key instruments was signed that we hail as the crucial cornerstone of our global nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament architecture - the Treaty of Non-Proliferation (NPT). It is hard to overstate the indispensable role this treaty has played and the tangible benefits it has provided for the last fifty years by significantly reducing the “number of fingers on the trigger” to quote what the US-American William Foster has told this very Committee in 1965.

5. While the success of the NPT remains undisputed, we cannot just simply take its success for granted: we need to constantly reaffirm our resolve to protect, uphold and strengthen it. It is our joint responsibility to undertake every thinkable endeavor to ensure that the NPT remains a success story and have thus to pave the way for a productive outcome at the RevCon in 2020.

6. Germany – like the overwhelming majority of states – shares the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. While we acknowledge that nuclear deterrence remains a component of the international security environment, Germany will work tirelessly to continue our pragmatic step-by-step approach to create the conditions favorable for a continuous reduction of nuclear weapons throughout the world. A key effort in this regard is to strengthen the effectiveness of the NPT regime and its three equally important pillars. We remind all the nuclear weapon states of their responsibility to initiate further reductions of their respective nuclear arsenals. A world free of nuclear weapons, albeit in the distant future, has to be the common goal for all states present here.

7. A major step in this direction was the creation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) 21 years ago. Although the CTBT
unfortunately is not yet in force, the ban on explosive nuclear weapons tests - enshrined in the Treaty - is already a de facto norm of international behavior: North Korea is the only state who has conducted a nuclear test in the 21st century. The organization’s monitoring system spans the entire globe and ensures that no nuclear test will go unnoticed. The Treaty has already proven its effectiveness by quickly and accurately detecting the illegal and despicable nuclear tests by North Korea. We therefore urge the remaining Annex II states - namely China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the United States - to finally sign and/or ratify the Treaty There is no doubt: Putting a legal and verifiable end to all nuclear weapons tests through entry into force of the CTBT will significantly contribute to international peace and security and to a world free of nuclear weapons.

8. As I have already mentioned, **North Korea** is the only state to have tested nuclear weapons in the last 20 years, contrary to international law and in flagrant violation of UNSC resolutions. While Germany welcomes the promising diplomatic rapprochements between North Korea, the United States and South Korea, we need to bear in mind that the UN Security Council has repeatedly called for a complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea’s nuclear program. Until verifiable steps are undertaken to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula, Germany calls on the international community to uphold the pressure on North Korea.

9. The Nuclear Agreement with Iran – the **JCPoA** - constitutes an important contribution to the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture, based on the NPT. Through a combination of tight nuclear restrictions and the world’s most robust verification regime, implemented by the IAEA, the JCPoA ensures that Iran’s nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful. As a result, the JCPoA also contributes significantly to security in the Middle East and beyond. Germany remains firmly committed to the sustained and full implementation of the JCPoA. Together with our EU partners, we have made it clear that we will uphold the JCPoA as long as Iran fully complies with its JCPoA commitments. We call upon Iran to extend full cooperation to the IAEA, including with regard to access and information sharing. Furthermore, and outside the scope of the JCPoA, we urge Iran to implement UNSCR 2231 in full, including the provisions related to ballistic missile activity and arms transfers.
10. The use of chemical weapons - be it by a state or a non-state actor - is unacceptable, must not go unpunished and calls for strong and united reaction by the international community. In this spirit, Germany fully supports the recent decision of the Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). This decision sends a clear message: Whoever commits a crime against humanity in resorting to chemical weapons must be held accountable, as we will never tolerate an erosion of the non-use norm. Germany stands ready to support the full implementation of this decision and to help fight impunity.

11. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) is a crucial pillar of the international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation architecture. Germany therefore welcomes the substantive discussions at this year’s Meetings of Experts, which could instigate a fruitful, effective and meaningful intersessional process for the period of 2018-2020. To allow this essential process to advance as agreed, all States Parties must respect their financial obligations. Let us not neglect our common responsibility in ensuring the BTWC’s continued relevance and vitality for a present and future marked by rapid, potentially destabilizing developments in the life sciences.

12. Small arms and light weapons and their ammunition are the root for enormous human suffering across the world and cause displacement and migration, thereby further deteriorating the dire international security context. Our UN-initiative in the framework of UNGA Resolution 72/55 places special emphasis on the improved control of ammunition in preparation of the GGE scheduled to commence in 2019. Going beyond Small arms and light weapons let me underline that we also need to identify red lines and improved practices for the use of explosive weapons in populated areas as discussed within our EWIPA-talks series in Geneva. We fully support UNSG Guterres’ decision to place EWIPA at the heart of his agenda for “Disarmament that Saves Lives”.

13. Another subject of increasing importance are Lethal autonomous weapons systems. Important progress has been achieved this year thanks to the substantive discussions the Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS. However we urgently need to find common ground for effectively addressing the policy challenges raised by autonomy in weapons systems. Germany and France suggest adopting a Political Declaration as a first step to commit states to the principle of human control over future lethal
weapons systems and to ensure they are in full compliance with international law.

14. **New threats and challenges** - such as the rapid proliferation of armed unmanned aerial systems, the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists, guaranteeing the peaceful use of outer space, the growing importance of cyberspace, hypersonic weapons - require us to develop new rules and new arms-control instruments or to adapt existing ones.

Mr. Chairman, Colleagues.

15. In the end it **depends on us**, on each and every state that has sent representatives to this committee to **decide how our future will look like**. Will it be as bleak as many people predict or can we continue to strengthen the multilateral world order to ensure lasting peace? We remain convinced that whatever we decide to do – it needs to be fully embedded in a multilateral framework.

16. Let us not forget that **what we do or fail to do will echo for generations to come and shape how our children and grandchildren will grow up**. Nonproliferation and disarmament are not just "nice to have", but fundamentals for our future - and thus especially for the younger generation. Let’s not disappoint them. Let’s work together to ensure that our time continues to be the safest, wealthiest and freest time in history.

Thank you very much!