General Assembly  
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First Committee  
General Debate  

Statement by Mr. Atle Midttun  
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Chair,

Fundamental norms against the use of weapons of mass destruction are under pressure.

Chemical weapons have been used in Syria, Iraq, Salisbury and Kuala Lumpur. Those responsible must be held to account. This is why the decision taken at the Special Conference of [States Parties to] the Chemical Weapons Convention in June on attribution is so important. We will offer our full support to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons as it seeks to implement this decision.

Chair,

Norway is fully committed to the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. To achieve this, we need a comprehensive agenda with mutually supportive building blocks. Our common goal can only be achieved through balanced, mutual, irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons.

(Check against delivery)
Just today, the Norwegian Government reported to the Storting, our parliament, on the consequences for Norway if it were to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Our conclusion remains unchanged: Norway will not sign or ratify the treaty.

The NPT continues to be the cornerstone of our common efforts on disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses. Norway is working for full implementation of the NPT.

Nuclear disarmament verification is a central building block for making progress. Ambassador Langeland, who is chair of the UN Group of Government Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification, will brief the First Committee on the group's work.

Norway is strongly advocating the rapid entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and the negotiation and conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Non-proliferation efforts are a crucial part of this work. The Comprehensive Safeguards and the Additional Protocol constitute the global standard for verification, enabling the IAEA to ensure compliance with the regime.

The DPRK's nuclear weapons and missile programmes remain unacceptable. We welcome recent diplomatic developments. At the same time, we stand firmly behind the relevant UN Security Council resolutions on this matter.

Norway contributed substantively to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and remains committed to Security Council resolution 2231. The US decision to withdraw has made the agreement vulnerable. We call on Iran to continue its full cooperation with the IAEA.

Furthermore, we call on the US and Russia to continue and expand the New START-treaty, and we call on Russia to comply with the INF treaty.
Chair,

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is another vital pillar of the global disarmament architecture. We must improve response and preparedness, address relevant developments in life sciences, tackle emerging challenges, and improve cooperation and assistance under the Convention.

We are also concerned about the increase of serious cyberattacks on civilian infrastructure. Our aim is to preserve an open, secure, robust and free cyberspace. Respect for international law and established norms must be upheld in the digital domain.

Chair,

The Mine Ban Convention is an important tool for ensuring the protection of civilians from landmines. The norm established by the Convention is strong. Norway is seeking the Presidency of the Mine Ban Convention for 2019 and plans to use the Review Conference to draw renewed political attention to the need to further strengthen the Convention. A mine-free world by 2025 is still our ambition.

This year, we are commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Cluster Munitions Convention. It, too, has established a norm that is making a substantial difference to human security. Sadly, however, these weapons are still being used in a number of conflicts.

Small arms and light weapons kill more than half a million people every year. We must intensify our efforts to combat all irresponsible and illegal trade in and use of such weapons, including ammunition. The Arms Trade Treaty is gaining ground. It establishes fundamental norms for responsible trade, including assessing the potential for gender-based violence before exports are authorised.
Chair,

We underline the importance of including a gender perspective in all arms control efforts.

Chair,

The First Committee sessions give us an important chance to strengthen cooperation on arms control and security. Let us seize this opportunity.

Thank you, Chair