Statement of the Republic of Estonia at the General Debate of the UNGA 74th Session of the First Committee, 10 October 2019

Mr Chairman,

Let me first congratulate you on assuming the Chairmanship of the 74th Session of the First Committee. Aligning with the statement of the European Union, we would like to highlight some issues in our national capacity.

Mr Chairman,

We are concerned that the international security environment has been deteriorating and tensions have been growing in recent years. The threats we face today are serious and complex. In this uncertain situation, it should be our collective effort to preserve and strengthen the existing institutions and non-proliferation and arms control architecture. Effectiveness and viability of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament regimes require that rules are followed and agreements are fully complied with, implemented and enforced by all parties.

As we approach the NPT Review Conference next year, we have to do our utmost to uphold and further reinforce its role as a major multilateral instrument of international security. Since its entry into force in 1970, the NPT has been a cornerstone of the global efforts to pursue nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy. Estonia shares the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons and continues to advocate for the “Progressive Approach” to be pursued in a realistic and responsible way. To this end, Estonia supports the commencement of the negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. In this context, I would like to voice our strong wish to take part in such future negotiations and we reiterate Estonia’s request since 2001 to participate fully and equally in the work of the CD.

Estonia regrets that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has still not entered into force. We support all international efforts towards this end and urge all States, particularly Annex II countries, to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay.
We also note with concern, that the proliferation of ballistic missiles, especially those capable of delivering nuclear weapons, remains a serious challenge. In this regard, we believe that the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Hague Code of Conduct play an important role in preventing missile proliferation. We believe that the membership of Estonia and all EU Member States in the MTCR would strengthen the regime and international non-proliferation efforts.

Mr Chairman,
For Estonia, it is of great concern that over the past years some States have disregarded longstanding core principles of international law and violated their international obligations.

The repeated use of chemical weapons in recent years have gravely undermined the universal prohibition against the use of such weapons. It is vital to maintain and further advance the global norm prohibiting chemical weapons and enhance the effectiveness of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We attach great importance to the decision of the Special Session of the Conference of States Parties of the CWC last June to improve the OPCW’s capacity of identifying the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons and to develop a universal attribution mechanism. We welcome the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team and commend the OPCW Technical Secretariat for the progress made to date. We look forward to the issuing of the IIT’s first report and we call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the IIT. Furthermore, Estonia supports the efforts conducted within the framework of the Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty has constituted a key instrument of strategic stability and the nuclear non-proliferation and arms control foundations for the last three decades. Russia has developed and fielded a missile system which has violated the INF Treaty and we deeply regret that Russia did not address the serious concerns repeatedly expressed about its non-compliance with the INF Treaty.

DPRK’s missiles and nuclear weapons programme continue to violate UN Security Council resolutions and threaten global peace and security. We call on the DPRK to refrain from further
provocations and take concrete steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. Until the DPRK has not taken these actions, all countries should strictly enforce existing sanctions.

Estonia continues to support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the International Atomic Energy Agency’s long term mission of verifying and monitoring Iran’s nuclear related commitments. We are deeply concerned by the measures taken by Iran since July, inconsistent with its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA, as reported by the Director General of the IAEA. We urge Iran to reverse these activities, to refrain from any further steps and to provide full cooperation with the IAEA.

Mr Chairman,

Estonia continues contributing to humanitarian demining and mine action. This includes support to the United Nations Mine Action Service, as well as to the humanitarian projects in bilateral and international frameworks. On the 20\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary of the Ottawa Convention, we expect the Fourth Review Conference to review progress on goals set for 2025 and to create a positive momentum for further universalization and improved implementation of obligations under the Convention.

We support the efforts to universalize and strengthen the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Regarding emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, we are convinced that the CCW is the most appropriate forum for such discussions, bringing together the right expertise. Estonia welcomes the outcome of the 2019 session, in particular agreement on the 11 Guiding Principles, and on the two-year timeline until the 2021 CCW Review Conference.

Estonia welcomes the opportunity to further advance the global understanding on the framework of international stability in cyberspace within the UN Open Ended Working Group and Group of Governmental Experts. In our view, the two processes should develop in a complementary manner, proceeding from the consensually agreed reports of the previous GGEs. Already agreed norms of responsible state behavior, together with existing international law, regional confidence building measures and capacity building mechanisms provide the structure we need for a cyber stability framework. A safe and stable cyberspace cannot be achieved without having an inclusive
multistakeholder approach. Estonia remains committed to promoting an open, free, and secure cyberspace for all, where the application of international law, fundamental freedoms and human rights are protected online.

Mr Chairman,

To conclude, Estonia is determined to contribute to the global efforts to strengthen the international law and rules based order, and to the implementation of existing disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation instruments. Becoming a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the period of 2020-21 demonstrates Estonia’s long-term commitment to take more responsibility in promoting international peace and security.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.