Ireland aligns with the statements made by the European Union and by Egypt on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition. A longer version of this statement will be on PaperSmart.

Allow me, firstly, to add my congratulations on assuming the Chair and to assure you of my Delegation’s full support to you and the members of your Bureau.

As the Committee charged with issues of disarmament and international security, our work has never been more important. This is a time of enormous challenge. The architecture developed over decades to support the goals of disarmament and to enhance security is under significant strain. Civilians are experiencing significant harm in conflict zones, particularly in urban conflict. Since the committee last met, we have seen the withdrawal of the two key States from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Agreement. Modernisation of nuclear arsenals risks triggering a new arms race. Threats to peace and stability in cyberspace are also growing with malicious cyber activity increasingly affecting local and national critical infrastructure, the international economy and global security. Tensions are increasing in outer space. Advances in science and technology have the potential to be de-stabilising and to pose challenges for the implementation of international humanitarian law.

At this year’s High Level Week, global leaders voiced their support for peace and security, tackling climate change, pursuing sustainable development and delivering on the 2030 Agenda, and the protection of human rights. The issues we will be dealing with in this Committee are directly relevant to whether we will fail or succeed on these global objectives. That is why it is so important, Chair, that the Committee was able to begin its work and we look forward to addressing all of the issues entrusted to us. Disarmament is a driver of security; failure to make progress on these issues can be harmful or even catastrophic to our peoples and our planet. The Secretary General’s Agenda on Disarmament provides a valuable framework for us to see the impact of our disarmament work on these broader objectives.
Within a complex, fast-moving landscape, First Committee provides a key opportunity for us to gain a better understanding of each others' motives and objectives. While far from perfect, the multilateral method offers the only real hope for cooperative, constructive engagement and for maintaining peace and security. We know that considering only narrow self-interest is not a sustainable approach. It takes courage and leadership to look beyond our national short-term positions. However, Ireland is convinced that through the interactions, debates and resolutions here, we can contribute to our overall shared goals of a peaceful, more secure world by supporting a strong, rules-based multilateral order, where the voice of each country can be heard and where we can reach negotiated solutions. That is why it has been so important, Chair, that the Committee functions effectively. I also would like to emphasise the value we attach to the diversity of voices – both the full and equal participation of women at all levels of disarmament and security decision-making, and the inclusion of varied, sometimes challenging, voices of civil society and other stakeholders.

Earlier this year, we welcomed High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu to Dublin. There she spoke of ensuring a safer and more secure world, setting out a new vision for arms control. She called to preserve the hard-won gains of the past, to exert all efforts for disarmament and to apply new ways of thinking to the challenges facing us. Her call for urgent action will inspire Ireland’s engagement in First Committee.

Later in the Seventh-Fourth Session of the General Assembly, we will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the entry-into-force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty with the tenth Review Conference. The context is challenging. Nonetheless, Ireland is determined to work for the Treaty and for a successful outcome to next year’s Review Conference. In this regard,
I emphasise the full complementarity of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and am pleased that legislation is currently being debated in our national Parliament in order to allow Ireland to ratify the TPNW imminently. I strongly encourage all Member States to sign and ratify and we look forward to the prompt entry into force of the Treaty.

We have and will continue to hear much about the difficult security environment. For Ireland, like so many others, including our partners in the NAC, this is not a pretext to shirk obligations or to defer progress on disarmament. Concrete progress on disarmament creates an enabling environment, enhances security and provides a reinforcing loop to allow further progress. In this regard, I recall the special responsibility of the states with the two largest nuclear arsenals, and in particular, I call on them to prioritise the extension of New START and the negotiation of a successor instrument.

While international tensions cannot be an excuse for pausing disarmament, they do serve as a reminder of the urgent need to address some of the most pressing risks. De-alerting is an evident priority here. So too is the urgent entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty – not only would it contribute important progress on disarmament, it would also offer robust protection to our fragile planet and climate from the negative effects of a nuclear detonation. Moratoria on testing, while welcome, cannot replace this important legally-binding text.

Ireland continues to regard the JCPOA as a major achievement of multilateral diplomacy and an important contribution to nuclear non-proliferation. We regret Iran’s continued incremental breaches, including the recently announced expansion of its centrifuge R&D activities prohibited under the terms of the Agreement. We urge Iran to return to immediate full compliance. We do not accept the argument that the Agreement is a quid pro quo and that observance of its terms can be traded, varied or modified on a unilateral basis.
Ireland welcomes the fact that some progress has been made in the DPRK over the past two years, but it is not sufficient. We urge the DPRK to comply fully with all of its international obligations, to cease all nuclear testing and re-engage on the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, immediately and without preconditions.

The pace of change in which we work is a challenge. The development of new technologies, new advances, new knowledge pose a concern both for proliferation regimes and for global stability and security. Ireland is concerned about the emerging risks presented by the development of hypersonic missiles and supports the Secretary General's call for a moratorium on testing.

Ireland is also heavily engaged in work within the Convention on Conventional Weapons on addressing the considerable ethical, moral and legal dilemmas posed by the development of lethal autonomous weapon systems. Our perspective is informed by our commitment to multilateralism and a deep desire to ensure that technological developments do not outpace our collective ability to ensure full compliance with international humanitarian law. It remains our firm belief that such weapons must always remain under meaningful human control, and that only human accountability can ensure full compliance with International Humanitarian Law.

Promoting a secure cyberspace requires a global response with both multilateral and multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration. Ireland strongly welcomes the positive start to the Open-ended Working Group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security” (OEWG Cyber), last month and looks forward to engaging in, and supporting, the process to build a stronger and safer, open cyberspace. Ireland particularly welcomes the informal intersessional meeting taking place in
December that will bring stakeholders including representatives from business, NGOs and academia together with Member States, to further strengthen the work of the OEWG.

Ireland recalls the central importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention and supports the work being undertaken in the OPCW to attribute responsibility for the use of chemical weapons that we have seen in recent times. Completing the universalisation of the Convention would be a positive step. Any breach of the prohibition on chemical weapons represents a serious challenge to us all; impunity cannot be accepted. For this reason, Ireland sees attribution as a key factor to enable accountability and continues to support the important work on attribution undertaken by the Technical Secretariat.

In the year when we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, Ireland is deeply concerned by the impact on civilians of the urbanisation of conflict. We attach particular priority to the issue of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA), and call for efforts to enhance the protection of civilians and civilian objects in urban armed conflict in compliance with IHL, thereby contributing to alleviating humanitarian harm. I welcome the important conference on Protection of Civilians in Urban Warfare, hosted by Austria in Vienna earlier this month, and Ireland look forward to consulting with states to take forward work on a political declaration, which we hope can be adopted next year. I urge all states to engage constructively in this process.

Gender equality has long been a priority for Ireland in disarmament, and we are proud to co-chair the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group. I was particularly pleased that the Arms Trade Treaty this year adopted a priority focus on gender in the implementation of the ATT and I believe the discussions in that forum brought valuable new insights into how we best apply the Treaty, and could offer lessons for other work.
The twentieth anniversary of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty later this year will be an important opportunity to take stock of our progress towards the goal of a mine-free world by 2025, and we urge all States Parties to retain a sense of ambition and urgency. Similarly, the Convention on Cluster Munitions has resulted in the destruction of over 99% of declare stockpiles of States Parties. I call for the universalisation of the ATT, the APLC, the CCM and the Convention on Conventional Weapons. Within the Convention on Conventional Weapons, Ireland currently attaches a particular importance to the application of Amended Protocol II to Mines other than anti-personnel mines (MOTAPM) and looks forward to presenting research on the developmental impacts of MOTAPM in November.

Against the backdrop of complex international security challenges, the international community must strenuously resist backward movement. First Committee provides us with an opportunity to reinvigorate our collective efforts to enhance global peace and security.

Thank you.