Mr. Chairman,

I convey Samoa’s warmest congratulations and full support to your Chairmanship of the First Committee for the seventy-fourth Session of the General Assembly and extends best wishes to your Bureau for steering the work of our Committee through its survey of the year’s developments in multilateral disarmament and international security.

The President of the General Assembly and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs in their respective statements during the General Debate of the First Committee, noted the rise in military spending, and the need to recommit to a working multilateralism framework, messages that resonate well with Samoa. Our Secretary General also during the opening of the current session of the General Assembly, highlighted the profound hope and faith that people place in the United Nations, genuine and real expectations that should compel Member States to work cooperatively and collaboratively to revitalize the multilateral system so that global security becomes a reality, not just an illusion.

Mr. Chairman,

The Pacific region continues to bear the scars from real-life experiences of
nuclear testing which united our countries and expedited the entry into force of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty in 1986. The presence of the zone is a deterrent to help safeguard our biodiversity and Ocean, the Pacific’s main resource for livelihood, from radioactive contamination caused by dumping nuclear wastes at sea.

Secretary General Guterres’ visit to the Pacific in May was timely. He raised concerns regarding the state of the nuclear waste storage facilities in the region, a concern shared by Pacific leaders over the years as expressed in their Forum Communiqués. Given the intensity and frequency of natural disasters fuelled by climate change, these storage facilities are on the brink of breaking apart, posing significant long-term negative impacts on the health of the Pacific people as well as the environment especially the health of our oceans. Our Leaders had been encouraging the Nuclear powers to address the ongoing impacts of nuclear testing, including, human rights, environmental contamination, and health impacts

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear weapons by their very existence, for whatever principal reason or fundamental justification, pose “needless”, “uncalled-for” and “unnecessary” threats especially to non-nuclear weapon island states like mine. The global security challenges cannot be used selectively as a convenient cover for continued reliance on nuclear weapons thus neglecting everyone’s shared responsibility to seek a more peaceful international society.

As a small Pacific island State, Samoa cannot protect itself from the threat of nuclear, conventional, small arms and light weapons and new and emerging threats to peace and security. Indeed, no nation can, regardless of size or wealth. Our only shield is the rule of law and international treaties and the vital protection they afford all States.
Samoa values the work of the Disarmament and International Security Committee in finding solutions to some of the issues that have proven difficult to progress and gain traction on the international sphere, holding peace hostage to the threats of an all-out nuclear war, or the collapse of states and societies from the instability that small arms and light weapons can create.

We are committed to cooperate and coordinate with other Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, States, International Organizations and relevant non-governmental organizations to promote concrete actions to move us closer to achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. But we can only do so much.

Mr. Chairman,

Next year will be the 2020 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the 50th anniversary of the NPT, the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and the foundation for realizing a world free of nuclear weapons.

Samoa’s commitment to ensuring the viability and success of the NPT is underscored by our membership in a number of international agreements which have the abolition of nuclear weapons at its core. We are a Party to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and had also ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2018. Regrettably, even with the best intention and goodwill of the majority of the member states, the Treaty will continue to be dormant and worthless, and its entry into force held hostage by the few that have yet to ratify it to bring it in to force.

The adoption of the ATT in 2014 is a clear demonstration of the UN community’s decisive response to the negative impacts of illicit arms trade in all its manifestations. Samoa also welcomes the outcome of the Fifth Conference of States Parties to the ATT, particularly the development and adoption of a list of practical recommendations on gender equality such as understanding the gendered impact of armed violence and advancing the implementation of its authorization criteria relating to gender-based
violence. Samoa is developing a national plan for ATT implementation to address this problem and has benefitted from the regional “Women, Peace and Security Summit” held in Samoa in August 2019, in cooperation with the Governments of New Zealand to highlight the links between the ATT, World Peace and Security Agenda and the SDGs.

This year also, with support from the Voluntary Trust Fund and in partnership with the Centre of Armed Violence Reduction, Samoa has started to streamline its data collection and reporting on weapons, to improve the capacity of Samoan officials and strengthen interagency coordination, to contribute to the effective national implementation of the ATT.

Lastly, In October 2018, Samoa conducted its third gun amnesty in the last 3 years to allow the people to hand in firearms without prosecutions in order to reduce unlawful possession of illegal weapons and to prevent unwanted accidents.

Mr Chairman,

Samoa firmly believes that the only guarantee humankind has against the use, and the threat of use of nuclear weapons is through the non-possession and total elimination of all nuclear weapons. The faith in the rule of law coupled with realistic steps towards regulating the flow of arms can lead to a more stable and peaceful world, providing the necessary platform for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you.