



**Opening Statement at the General Debate of the First Committee of the
United Nations General Assembly**

by

KIM Won-soo

Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs



United Nations General Assembly

New York

8 October 2015

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address the Committee today, the first opportunity as Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

At the outset I would like to congratulate Mr Karel Jan Gustaaf van Oosterom on his election as Chair of the First Committee. I have no doubts about his ability to successfully shepherd the work of the Committee. I also wish to assure the members of the Bureau and all delegations of the fullest cooperation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Ladies and gentlemen

This year we celebrate seven decades of the United Nations striving to build a safer and more prosperous world. Member States have laid the foundations for future generations through the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

The agenda is the product of collective will. I hope that the same solidarity can be reflected in the work of this Committee.

Ladies and gentlemen

I would like to address four key topics today. The first is nuclear disarmament.

The sustainable development of our planet is an existential issue for us all. Yet we cannot forget the threat nuclear weapons also pose to our very existence.

The international community shares the noble goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, but the divisions in how to achieve it are still deep.

This was evident at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference this year. It was on display at the Conference on Disarmament and very likely we will hear it echoed in this Committee.

I am concerned that the considerable progress that we have made since the end of the Cold War has stalled.

The agreement reached between the E3+3 and Iran is a truly historic one. I commend all parties involved for their tireless efforts. It shows that diplomacy can work. It also shows that the nuclear-weapon States can be united on matters of international security. I hope that the same leadership can be shown on nuclear disarmament.

There is a palpable frustration over the pace and scale of disarmament. Anxiety about the dangers posed by nuclear weapons is deeply and genuinely felt – the large number of States that support the humanitarian consequences movement is testament to this.

Continued bilateral and plurilateral efforts by nuclear-weapon States are vital to nuclear disarmament. But if we are to take the necessary collective measures to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, we need to develop an inclusive process that can make a genuine contribution to this goal. We need a process that will allow disparate views to be heard. As the Secretary-General has urged it need to done here, common ground and a pathway forward must be found. The United Nations is the only truly global multilateral body.

We have no time to lose. We all know problems become much harder to manage without a process. It is time to roll up our sleeves. I hope this Committee will do its part and bring all parties to the table.

Those eight States whose ratification is required to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force have a special responsibility to do so. They should not wait for others to act. However, there are twenty-five other States who have yet to ratify the Treaty. I call on them to do so expeditiously. Every new ratification strengthens the norm of universality. ODA in close consultation with the CTBTO will do everything to help these states build the capacity to prepare the domestic ground for ratification.

Negotiations on a Fissile Material (Cut-off) Treaty are long-overdue. There is broad support for an irreversible, verifiable, non-discriminatory and multilateral FMCT. I hope that the report of the Group of Government Experts established by General Assembly resolution 67/53 (A/70/81) will help facilitate discussions in whatever way this Committee find it appropriate, formal or informal.

Ladies and gentlemen

Second, I would like to discuss is emerging risks.

In this rapidly evolving world we are becoming ever more dependent on technology. Emerging technologies bring many benefits, but they could also pose challenges to peace and security if we do not prepare ourselves to mitigate the risks. I am concerned there is an institutional and normative vacuum – that the technology is more nimble than we are. The gap between the technological reality and our ability to govern them is growing. We need to find a way to narrow the gap – this is a battle we cannot lose.

Our goal must be to ensure the strict application of international law to outer space, to the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, to the development of increasingly autonomous weapons and especially to cyberspace.

In outer space, the growing number of actors and technical capabilities is resulting in an increasingly complex environment. At the same time, outer space is of growing significance in the strategic doctrines of many countries. Greater international cooperation and action is needed to ensure that outer space remains a zone free of conflict and that the exploration and use of outer space can continue to be carried out for the benefit of all countries.

The internet is hardwired into our daily lives, more and more of which are spent on line. But along with its many benefits, the internet age has also exposed vulnerabilities. As Secretary-General Ban has said, “a future catastrophe involving the financial or health systems, key urban infrastructure or deadly weaponry is not hard to imagine.”

Moreover, the pervasive nature of information technology leaves it vulnerable to exploitation, including by violent extremists who use the internet to incite, recruit and train, and plan attacks. These non-state actors must not be allowed to use the internet to evade accountability.

For the past ten years, this Committee, through its Group of Governmental Experts, has been exploring how to address the issue of cyber governance. However, it is clear that technology is outpacing us. I urge the Committee to strengthen work towards the creation of ‘rules of the road’ for global cyber norms, rules and principles. This issue affects our security, our societies and our economic development.

Ladies and gentlemen

Third, I would like to provide an update on chemical weapons and Syria.

The adoption of Security Council Resolution 2235 was a positive outcome in the midst of a dark conflict. The independent OPCW - UN Joint Investigative Mechanism it created has the mandate to identify, to the greatest extent feasible, the perpetrators, organisers, sponsors or those otherwise involved in the use of chemical weapons.

I welcome the solidarity shown by the Security Council on this issue. However, the new Mechanism has a daunting task ahead of it. I can assure you that the UN stands ready to provide whatever assistance we can. I trust the Syrian Arab Republic, all parties engaged in the conflict and Member States will demonstrate the same support.

As horrific as chemical weapons are, we cannot forget that over two hundred thousand Syrians have been killed by conventional weapons, including the use of heavy weapons in populated areas. There is no military solution in Syria; this crisis can only be resolved through a political settlement.

Ladies and gentlemen

The fourth issue I would like to discuss is the need for sustained resourcing of the international legal architecture for disarmament.

One of the clear highlights of the past year was the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty. The ATT can be a major check against the illicit arms trade that flows from diversion, theft and unauthorised transfers. Its entry into force demonstrates that when the international community is united it can produce results.

However, entry into force is only the first step. Only when this treaty is completely and universally implemented can its full potential be realised. I call upon the more than forty states that supported but have not ratified the ATT to do so expeditiously. The Secretary-General and the UN are willing to help however we can.

Likewise, I urge all States Parties to render the necessary capacity-building assistance and allow the Treaty to reach its full potential.

The ATT is one example of where entry into force is only the beginning. States' responsibilities do not end once a treaty is negotiated and adopted. Disarmament treaties and institutions require sustained interest and sustained resources.

Forgive me if I am too blunt, but I have an obligation to remind Member States through this Committee of their obligations, including financial obligations, under the treaties to which they are parties. Outstanding costs are effectively met by the United Nations and all of its Member States, potentially affecting the efficiency of implementation support units and secretarial functions for treaties.

For example, in May 2015 States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention owed USD 191,130.31 and States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions owed the United Nations secretariat US\$ 229,236.17 for the servicing of conferences. States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons owed USD 465,245.82, and States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention owed USD 592,518.46. These are only a few examples.

The story is the same for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. UNIDIR urgently needs to secure funding so it can build upon its first 35 years and continue to serve all States as the thought leader of the United Nations system on disarmament and related international security questions.

The long term success of any disarmament mechanism requires sustainable funding. No treaty and implementation mechanism is for free and nor should this be an expectation of States.

I am personally engaged on this issue, as I have been for years in my previous role. I urge this Committee to look at this issue very seriously because it does not affect one treaty or institution. This is a very worrying trend and we need to ask ourselves what message we are sending to the world. Because if this trend continues the international legal architecture for disarmament will collapse. We need sustained interest in and funding for all treaties and institutions.

This Committee has a lot of work ahead of it. I encourage all of you to exercise maximum flexibility to achieve consensus on these crucial issues, including procedural issues related to the organisation of panel discussions. I hope the resolutions adopted here are done so in a spirit of collective purpose and practical will.

I wish you the best of luck in your deliberations.

Thank you.