

First Committee Speakers Raise Grave Concerns about Broad Range of Weapons Widely Circulating in Volatile Regions Plagued by Terrorist Groups

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Among the gravest threats today, the widespread circulation of conventional weapons, including shipments reaching terrorist groups operating in vulnerable regions, was killing thousands of people and affecting millions more, the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) heard today as it continued its general debate.

Speakers said action must be swift and collective to stem the flow of small arms and light weapons to countries and regions that had already been hard hit by their proliferation. The potential of a catastrophe loomed large, some delegates said, citing on-the-ground examples of the current situation of States living in insecurity due to the spread of a variety of those arms.

Some delegates highlighted the devastating impact left on some States by the circulation of weapons that had been produced in other countries. The delegate from the State of Palestine said some countries measured power by the number of weapons they held, he said, while others were left counting the victims of those weapons.

Africa, as a region, had suffered disproportionately due to the irresponsible transfer of arms, several speakers said. The representative of Djibouti said conflicts and insecurity had cost the continent billions of dollars every year and countless human casualties.

Concerned about the possibility of nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands, the delegate from Afghanistan said immediate action by the international community was needed to prevent a looming humanitarian and political disaster in the face of the ever-broadening proliferation of arms. Last month, his Government had seized two trailer trucks entering Afghanistan from Pakistan with 35,700 kg of ammonium nitrate, an amount nearly 20 times larger than what was used in the Oklahoma City bombing.

The nuclear threat was another grave concern, with some speakers underlining the importance of recognizing the Humanitarian Pledge coming out of the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Vienna, Austria, December 2014.

With Algeria having been a nuclear testing ground in the early 1960s, the representative of that country said his Government understood the consequences of such activities. As such, he remained concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons on the environment, vital resources and human health.

Establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East was a concern of some delegates, as was clearly defining a range of weapons of mass destruction. The representative of the Holy See questioned the existing definition of a weapon of mass destruction. He said discussions about such weapons should go beyond traditional categories to include devastatingly powerful conventional weapons used to perpetrate war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Also speaking were the representatives of Brunei Darussalam, Nepal, Turkey, Morocco, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Malaysia and Guinea. The representatives of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean and of the International Atomic Energy Agency also delivered statements.

The representatives of the Republic of Korea, Syria, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Libya and United States spoke in exercise of the right of reply.

The First Committee will meet again at 3 p.m. Wednesday, 12 October, to begin its series of thematic discussions.

Statements

NOORHAZWANI ARIFFIN (Brunei Darussalam), associating herself with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that as a State party to the Treaty of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-weapon-Free Zone, known as the Treaty of Bangkok, she hoped for the early accession of all nuclear-weapon States to the Treaty's Protocol without reservations. She was, however, concerned with the substandard pace of progress in global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts and noted that Brunei Darussalam had endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge, coming out of the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Vienna, Austria, December 2014. She condemned the use of chemical weapons and expressed concern on the illicit international transfer of small arms and light weapons and its potentially devastating impact on peace and security of Member States.

GHANA SHYAM LAMSAL (Nepal) said implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change would require a large amount of resources. However, commitments were far below expectations, while military spending had grown to an estimated \$1.7 trillion. "We should focus our efforts to divert resources from military expenditure towards much-needed areas like achieving the Sustainable Development Goals set by our leaders for our own cause," he said, adding that funding development would greatly help prevent conflicts.

RAUF ALP DENKTAŞ (Turkey) said that the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons through practical steps in an incremental manner was still the only viable way forward. Equally important was proceeding with consensus.

Recent ministerial meetings had been helpful in raising awareness on the Treaty's entry into force. As an active supporter of non-proliferation efforts, Turkey condemned the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear testing and ballistic missile launches. Regarding nuclear and radiological security, he valued the international safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), calling it an indispensable verification standard. Warning against the possible humanitarian catastrophes linked to the use of nuclear weapons, he said the time had come to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. Regarding chemical, biological and toxin weapons, he said Turkey did not possess any such weapons and called upon all stakeholders to strictly implement relevant conventions.

MOHAMMED BESSEDIK (Algeria) expressed regret that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty had not yet entered into force. Having been a nuclear testing ground in the early 1960s, Algeria understood the consequences of such activities. For those reasons, his Government endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge to join efforts to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons as it remained concerned about their catastrophic humanitarian consequences on human health, the environment and vital resources. Concerning the issue of conventional arms, he stressed that their illicit trade continued to threaten peace and stability in many regions, particularly in North Africa and the Sahel. As a supply source for terrorist and organized crime groups, that issue was of particular concern to Algeria. As such, the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument were more relevant than ever before, he said, emphasizing that global cooperation was essential for the implementation of both those instruments.

MAHMOUD SAIKAL (Afghanistan) called for an end to the mass, illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons that had enabled terrorists to advance their cause and had resulted in tremendous suffering among the Afghan people for decades. Last month, his Government had seized two trailer trucks entering Afghanistan from Pakistan with 35,700 kg of ammonium nitrate, an amount nearly twenty times larger than what was used in the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. States must be responsible in controlling terrorists' access of weapons, he said, adding that all relevant parties must further strengthen their laws to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. He went on to express deep disappointment at the failure to convene a conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. As the political turmoil in the region threatened to spill over into neighbouring regions, immediate action by the international community was needed to prevent a looming humanitarian and political catastrophe, he said.

SAADA DAHER HASSAN (Djibouti) said the billions spent on weapons every year could be funnelled instead to address the various challenges the world faced. Shared global strategies were necessary to address those threats and the only area where there was presently no strategy was nuclear weapons. Rhetoric must be translated into concrete action toward a nuclear-weapon-free world, she said, adding that the status quo was no longer an option. She looked forward to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, particularly in the Middle East and that the renewed focus on the humanitarian impact of

nuclear weapons had raised questions about current policies. Her Government had endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge and looked forward to a high-level General Assembly conference in 2017 on nuclear disarmament. At the same time, Africa had suffered disproportionately due to the irresponsible transfer of arms, she said, noting that conflicts and insecurity had cost billions of dollars every year and many human casualties. As such, an effective Arms Trade Treaty would give peace a chance in a region and people that had known too little of that.

BOUCHAIB ELOUMNI (Morocco) said current discussions had been marked by deterioration in international security and had been exacerbated by the terrorist threat, particularly in the Middle East and the Sahel. The nuclear tests of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea could restart an arms race and threatened peace and security in the region. Diplomatic dialogue was the appropriate means to solve such disputes, he said. Morocco was committed to a nuclear-weapon-free world, he said, adding that the Open-ended Working Group had emphasized the division among Member States on practical disarmament measures and many wanted to see a breakthrough toward the total elimination of those weapons. In that regard, he supported the call for the convening of a conference in 2017 to negotiate such an instrument and said that a real dialogue with everyone's participation was needed. He expressed regret that the 2015 Non-Proliferation-Treaty Review Conference had not established a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in the Middle East and said a conference on that issue could be historic and strengthen regional peace and security.

IVENS DE SOUSA (Timor-Leste), associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement and ASEAN, expressed full support for, and confidence in, the Security Council in finding a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. Being a post-conflict nation, Timor-Leste knew what it meant to have a security crisis in a non-peaceful environment. It was a founding member of "G7+" group of countries, sharing experiences and lessons learned with other post-conflict nations, he said. It had also ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty and Test-Ban Treaty, among other instruments. Nuclear disarmament and eliminating small-arms trafficking should remain top priorities for the United Nations.

MOEZZ LAOUANI (Tunisia), associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Group and the Arab Group, said the Non-Proliferation Treaty was a key tool for achieving nuclear disarmament. At the same time, Tunisia supported the Open-ended Working Group's recommendation in favour of a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. Noting the stalemate over the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, he said a lack of action would seriously undermine the credibility of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and lead to an arms race in the region. The immense resources currently devoted to nuclear weapons would be better spent on development, environmental protection and the promotion of democracy and human rights. Disarmament was even more indispensable than ever before given the ubiquitous nature of the terrorist threat, he said, urging redoubled efforts to ensure that non-State actors did not obtain weapons of mass destruction.

RAMLAN BIN IBRAHIM (Malaysia), associating himself with ASEAN, said a majority of Member States were concerned and frustrated by the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament. He welcomed the recommendations of the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, saying its process complemented the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Arguments and fears that the process undermined the Treaty were unwarranted and unsubstantiated. Security Council resolution 2310 (2016) on the Test-Ban Treaty, which Malaysia supported, should inspire fresh impetus for Annex 2 States to expeditiously sign and ratify that instrument. Malaysia would again in 2016 be submitting its traditional draft resolution on follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, incorporating technical updates. On conventional weapons, he said Malaysia continued to carry out internal consultations as part of its consideration to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty.

MAMADI TOURÉ (Guinea) said the world must persevere to achieve full nuclear disarmament and a collective security for all of humanity. Disarmament remained a major issue due to the consequences of the production, proliferation and illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons, particularly in Africa. That dangerous scourge had reached an unprecedented level, hence the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the Arms Trade Treaty remained critical and must be implemented with more visible ownership. Key actors, such as civil society, must be supported in that regard as well, he said. His delegation supported the cessation of the arms race in outer space and for a break in the decades-long deadlock in the Conference of Disarmament. Guinea stood willing to make a contribution to uphold the global order and build a world that was peaceful and fair. A global approach was essential, he said, noting that regional security must also be reinforced to resolve conflicts and ward off the nuclear threat.

BERNARDITO CLEOPAS AUZA, Permanent Observer of the Holy See, said the continued use of small arms and incendiary weapons was deeply disturbing. The international community should urgently reconsider what constituted a weapon of mass destruction, he added. Discussions about such weapons should go beyond traditional categories to include devastatingly powerful conventional weapons used to perpetrate war crimes and crimes against humanity. It was imperative to do so in order to successfully implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Wars and conflicts could only be resolved if there were strong controls on both the legal and illegal arms trade. Regarding the recommendation of the Open-ended Working Group, he said the First Committee would need to seriously consider how to pursue a negotiating process that would be open to all States.

MAJED BAMYA, observer for the State of Palestine, associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement and the Arab Group, said it was of utmost importance to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. One party, Israel, had illegally developed a nuclear arsenal and refused to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty or to place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. The process of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone must be open to all and stoppable by none. There was a similarly urgent need to uphold prohibitions on chemical and

biological weapons. While not yet a party to the Arms Trade Treaty, the State of Palestine supported its underlying principles. Some countries measured power by the number of weapons they held, while others were left counting the victims of those weapons. Palestine, which remained under military and colonial occupation, would strive for the promotion, enforcement and respect of international law, including in the vital field of disarmament.

LUIZ FILIPE DE MACEDO SOARES, Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), said that on 26 September, the Agency had issued a declaration on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. That had demonstrated its decision to include an institution in the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, to ensure its compliance, but also to enhance the region's action against nuclear weapons. In February 2017, the Treaty of Tlatelolco would celebrate its fiftieth anniversary, he said, noting that a high-level international seminar on the topic would be held in Mexico City.

XOLISA MABHONGO, Director of the New York Office of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which was celebrating its sixtieth anniversary in 2016, noted the role of safeguards in ensuring that States fulfilled their international obligations not to develop nuclear weapons. Underlining their vital role in the non-proliferation regime, he said safeguards agreements were currently in force with 182 States. However, 12 States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty had yet to bring into force comprehensive agreements with the Agency, as required by Article III of the Treaty. For those States parties, the Agency could not draw any safeguards conclusions, he said, urging them to conclude such agreements as soon as possible. The number of States with additional protocols in force stood at 128, he said. The Agency stood ready to assist with verification tasks, if requested, and supported the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which entered into force in 2016, nearly 11 years after its adoption, would reduce the risk of a terrorist attack involving nuclear material. He urged all countries to adhere to that important legal instrument, thus ensuring that nuclear and other radioactive materials around the world were properly protected against malicious acts by terrorists.

Right of Reply

The representative of the Republic of Korea, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the deployment of missiles was a self-defence measure against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's threat in the region. The Government would do anything possible to save the people of the region, he stressed.

The representative of Syria, in exercise of the right of reply, said "Turkish crime against my country has doubled", expressing regret over that country's hostile policies. Decrying the Government of Turkey for its breach of international law, he said that it had smuggled chemical weapons and handed them over to terrorist groups in Syria.

The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in exercise of the right of reply, said he totally rejected the allegations made by the Republic of Korea. "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a nuclear Power as a result of threats and nuclear blackmail from the United States," he said. "Its nuclear deterrent guarantees peace and security in the region and the world."

The representative of Libya, in exercise of the right of reply, referred to remarks made by his counterpart from Syria, citing Security Council reports regarding the transfer of chemical weapons such as sarin gas from Libya to Turkey. No such reports existed, he said, adding that Libya did not and would not possess sarin gas.

The representative of the United States, in exercise of the right of reply, emphasized that the United States posed no threat to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Rather, it was the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's provocative behaviour and rhetoric that was the source of instability on the Korean Peninsula. He called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease its nuclear activities, adding that the United States would not recognize it as a nuclear-weapon State.

The representative of the Republic of Korea, speaking a second time, noted the number of nuclear tests and missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Now was the time for the international community to address that shared security concern.

The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, taking the floor a second time in exercise of the right of reply, described the statement delivered by the United States' speaker as "ridiculous and very provocative". That country had blackmailed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with nuclear weapons during the Korean War, he said, noting that millions of families had been separated as a result.

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