



IRELAND

Statement

at the

UNGA73 General Debate of the First Committee

New York, 9 October 2018

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Thank you Chair,

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

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

Ireland regards the work of the First Committee as key to achieving the vision set out in the UN Charter, and more recently in the Secretary General's new Agenda for Disarmament of achieving a safer and more secure world for all. In a year when we have experienced challenges to norms against use of WMDs, violations of International Humanitarian Law, and political stalemate on issues of substance, it is vital we use this opportunity to re-engage with our collective commitment to sustainable peace and security, which is needed now more than ever. The unrestricted spread and use of weapons – whether conventional or WMDs – threatens human rights, the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, and indeed the very future of our planet.

Ireland believes that our collective focus throughout this committee should be to concentrate on the many shared goals and perspectives we hold in common, to take forward all effective measures aimed at making our world safer for all States; and to demonstrate the flexibility and political will to step outside the strict silos of national self-interest and achieve genuine progress.

Chair,

This year, Ireland marks a number of important milestones in nuclear disarmament. 60 years ago, former Foreign Minister Frank Aiken introduced the first of what became known as the 'Irish Resolutions' which lay the groundwork for the adoption of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty ten years later. In his speech introducing the resolution, Minister Aiken expressed hope

that ‘true prestige [...] will now be won [...] by those countries which [...] by deliberate choice, and in the interests of peace, refrain from producing’ nuclear weapons”.

In the fifty years since the NPT opened for signature, we can confidently say that it has become one of the most successful multilateral instruments in history and is the backbone of the non-proliferation regime. Yet, as we conduct our work throughout the duration of this Committee, we must also acknowledge that the Treaty’s original promise of disarmament remains unfulfilled. Nuclear weapons are still at the centre of some States’ security doctrines; costly modernisation programmes add to international tensions and instability; and the lack of progress on commitments already undertaken jeopardises and undermines the spirit and purpose of the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Put simply, as long as nuclear weapons exist, the security of all States is in danger.

That’s why, as we mark one year since the opening for signature of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we should be heartened by the ‘deliberate choice’ that many Member States have made for a world free from nuclear weapons. Ireland believes firmly and without reservation that the TPNW complements and strengthens existing nuclear disarmament architecture, and revitalises the long-neglected disarmament provisions of the NPT. As the Secretary General’s Agenda for Disarmament points out, the issue is as fundamental and as profound as saving humanity. We encourage all States to sign the TPNW, so that we may never again witness the unparalleled humanitarian and environmental catastrophe of a nuclear weapons explosion.

Mr. Chair,

2018 also marks 20 years since the formation of the New Agenda Coalition, which has consistently advocated for the implementation of concrete, transparent, verifiable and

irreversible nuclear disarmament measures. Ireland is anxious to get down to work and make progress on these issues.

The deteriorating international security environment continues to be cited as justification for slow progress. For Ireland and our like-minded partners the global security environment is not an excuse for inaction – rather it reinforces the need for urgency. Indeed, given increasing international tensions, and the heightened risk of a nuclear detonation Ireland would particularly welcome a focus on risk reduction measures such as dealerting, as a matter of urgency. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty also remains a top priority for Ireland and would represent a tangible gain for the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. What is lacking is not favourable conditions, but political will and determination.

Chair,

Expressions of support are not enough to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons technology, material and know-how. We all have a responsibility as part of the global community to support non-proliferation efforts in a pragmatic way. This year, as a tangible expression of Ireland's commitment, we are co-Chairing, together with Iceland, the Missile Technology Control Regime. A successful plenary was hosted in Dublin where an extensive review and evaluation of the regime's activities over the previous 12 months was conducted. Partners devoted increased attention to Intangible Technology Transfer, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, Catch All Controls and Regional Proliferation issues. The Co-Chairs have also embarked on an ambitious and strategic outreach programme to non-MTCR countries to further advance the regime's profile and ensure that as many states as possible adhere to what are the best practice guidelines for export controls of missile technology.

Chair,

When we convened last year, Ireland with many others expressed alarm and condemnation at the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We regret that one year on, Syrians continue to suffer, and that the norm against use has been further undermined through instances of chemical weapon use in Malaysia and more recently in the UK. We once again affirm that the use of such weapons is an outright violation of International Law and that those responsible must be held to account. We remain disappointed at the failure to reach agreement on the renewal of the OPCW- UN Joint Investigate Mechanism (JIM) mandate last year. This failure undermines attempts to ensure accountability for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and damaged efforts to uphold the international chemical non-proliferation regime.

We believe that the first step towards accountability is attribution. We therefore welcome the Decision of the Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in June. By enhancing the capacity and capabilities of the OPCW to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and, by request, elsewhere, this decision will help to strengthen the implementation of Chemical Weapons Convention and help to end impunity for the use of these weapons. To further strengthen our commitment to ensure that those who use chemical weapons must held to account, Ireland joined the *International Partnership Against the Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons* earlier this year, and we look forward to continuing the work of this important initiative.

We believe the international community as a whole must work harder to enforce the prohibition of chemical weapons use and to redouble our efforts to prevent, and hold accountable, those who are responsible for such abhorrent acts.

Chair,

In light of the increasingly protracted nature of urban conflicts, Ireland reaffirms its support for the international instruments designed to regulate and minimize humanitarian harm resulting from use of conventional weapons. It is ten years since the Convention on Cluster Munitions was adopted in Dublin, and since then a collective total of 1.4 million cluster munitions and more than 177 million sub munitions have been destroyed by 35 States Parties to the convention. This represents the destruction of 99% of the total global cluster munition stocks declared by States Parties. The CCM is evidence of what the international community can achieve through working cooperatively in pursuit of common goals. We continue to see the implementation and universalisation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions as a priority.

Our work remains incomplete as long as conventional weapons continue to cause unacceptable harm to civilians in conflict zones. The continued use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas continues to devastate communities and poses a serious challenge to the implementation of International Humanitarian Law. The protection of civilians in armed conflict is a duty shared among all States. We must act to stem the devastating short and long term humanitarian impact of explosive weapons upon civilians. To this end, Ireland fully supports the recommendation of Secretary General to ‘develop a political declaration, appropriate limitations, common standards and operational policies in conformity with international humanitarian law relating to the use of EWIPA’. Ireland hopes to make a meaningful contribution to this process.

The gendered impact of conventional arms use also remains a priority. In 2018, Ireland sponsored Control Arms to produce a step-by-step guide on how states can incorporate gender-based violence into export control risk assessments. This guide, which will be promoted at an upcoming side event, is designed to help States more effectively implement the ATT’s gender

provisions, and includes comprehensive guidance and information for States to use, both when designing their own assessment procedures and when carrying out individual assessments. We would like to congratulate Brazil, Cameroon and Chile for completing their ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty this year, marking another step towards universalisation of this important Treaty and we call on those countries who have not yet signed or ratified the ATT to do so at the earliest opportunity.

We were also pleased to note that the UN Secretary General's new agenda for disarmament recognises the importance of gender as a cross-cutting issue. Ireland, with the IGC Disarmament Impact Group, will host side event on 15 October to explore concrete measures to achieve the Agenda's call for "equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament".

Chair,

The question of the UN's need to respond to technological advances is not a new one. We saw the dawn of the atomic age just days after the signature of the Charter. Now, as then, we must keep our eyes firmly on the future of weapons technology. As the Secretary General highlighted when he opened this year's High Level Week, "The prospect of machines with the discretion and power to take human life is morally repugnant". Autonomous Weapons Systems pose considerable moral, legal and ethical dilemmas which require careful and sustained consideration. It is 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. Going forward, we will work with other states to find a way to comprehensively address these challenges and ensure humans retain control over the use of force in matters of life and death.

Chair,

Ireland's long engagement in disarmament is part of our DNA. We are a consistent independent voice that keeps the protection of people and our planet at the heart of disarmament. We are proud to be a candidate for election to the Security Council for the term 2021-2022 and our campaign is based on these same values of empathy, partnership and independence.

Thank you.