



# IRELAND

Statement by

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FIRST COMMITTEE

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**GENERAL DEBATE**

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*Check against delivery*

Thank you Mr Chairman,

Ireland aligns with the Statement made by the European Union and also with the Statement made by Mexico on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

I wish to join previous speakers in adding my congratulations on your Chairmanship. I can assure you of my Delegation's full support to both you and the members of your Bureau.

In the interests of time I will read an edited version of this statement. We will also elaborate further on some issues during the thematic sessions.

Mr Chairman

I wish to begin by congratulating the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons for the award of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize. The Decision by the Nobel Committee to award the prize to ICAN is an important recognition of their untiring and ceaseless efforts to rid the world of Nuclear Weapons. It also reflects the signal achievement to which their work has been

such an impetus, the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last July.

The award by the Nobel Committee underlines the urgency and relevance of our work in this Committee. The challenges we face today in Disarmament and Non-proliferation are global and serious. They are in the remit of this Committee and are our responsibility, but they have far wider implications for the international community's aspirations for a safer and more secure world

Mr Chairman

The situation in the Korean peninsula has, unthinkably, brought the possibility of nuclear war back to the world stage. Nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles have been tested illegally and blatantly by the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea, in contravention of numerous Security Council Resolutions.

Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Simon Coveney TD has condemned the nuclear programme and ballistic missile testing by the DPRK unreservedly and urged the resumption of diplomatic engagement so that a peaceful resolution leading to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

The entry into force of the CTBT is now more urgent than ever and we call on

all remaining Annex 2 States, in line with UNSCR 2310 to sign and ratify the Treaty so that the international norm against nuclear testing can become legally binding also.

Mr Chairman

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Ireland has long been associated with, and to which we are deeply committed, remains the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Ireland views the NPT from a global perspective and has worked hard within this Review Cycle to broaden our consideration of its implementation. Last year, with Chatham House, we launched the paper, Nuclear Disarmament, the Missing Link in Multilateralism, the first of a series of papers designed to show the linkages between our work on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-proliferation and other areas of high level global concern. At this First committee we will launch another element of this work, Nuclear Weapons and Cultural Heritage. We look forward to further engagement on this matter at the upcoming NPT preparatory Committee in Geneva.

Ireland welcomes the positive and constructive approach to the work of the NPT which was evident at the Preparatory Committee. We are however particularly concerned that work on the Middle East Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their delivery systems should regain momentum, with the involvement of all stakeholders from the region. Ireland was pleased to host, with BASIC and civil society actors from the region, a Side event on the topic: “A Draft Treaty for a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East - time to envisage the practical “. We look forward to further engagement on this issue.

Mr Chairman

The NPT always envisaged a separate legal instrument to give effect to its disarmament provisions. The original drafters knew that their work was not finished. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted by two thirds of the United Nations in July, finally fulfils the legal gap in implementing these commitments. This robust and ambitious Treaty, which transmits our powerful vision of a world free from nuclear weapons, is a result of good will, political leadership, engagement in good faith and strong commitment to a common goal.

It shows, once again, what the international community, both States and Civil Society, can achieve when we work together. Its content is ground-breaking, both in its core provisions which effectively prohibit nuclear weapons, and also in its deep commitment to humanitarianism, to disarmament education, as well as its recognition of the Hibakusha and the importance of the full and effective participation of women in the future work of the Treaty.

Ireland is proud to have been among the first signatories of the Treaty and we will move swiftly now to take the necessary measures to enable us to ratify it quickly. We urge other States to do likewise. It is imperative that this important instrument can enter into force as soon as possible.

Mr Chairman

Like others who have spoken we do not wish to perpetuate disagreements regarding the best path towards achieving our common goal of multilateral nuclear disarmament. Instead we wish to concentrate on the many shared goals and perspectives we hold in common. Ireland will continue to work, with our partners in the New Agenda Coalition, to make the 2020 NPT Review Cycle a success and on taking forward all effective measures which assist toward

making our world safer from the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any nuclear detonation, accidental or deliberate.

Mr Chairman

Ireland continues to be deeply committed to non-proliferation as well as to Disarmament, recognising the crucial role of export control regimes in contributing to a safer and more secure world and in underpinning essential instruments such as the NPT. Ireland, with Iceland, will assume the Co-Chairmanship of the **Missile Technology Control Regime** later this month, As Co-Chairs of the MTCR, Ireland has actively engaged in outreach and consultation to ensure that we can work to expand and deepen the influence of this important export control regime.

Mr Chairman,

We join other states in expressing our grave concern at the confirmed use of **Chemical Weapons** in Syria by both State and non-State actors. The use of these weapons, long prohibited by international law, is truly appalling. We would like to voice our support for the work of the Organisation for the

Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), notably its Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact Finding Mission (FFM) and the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). Those responsible for these terrible crimes must be held accountable.

On a positive note we welcome the recent announcement by the Russian Federation of the verifiable destruction of their remaining chemical weapons, a development which brings us closer to the goal of a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr Chairman,

Ireland is also engaged and supports the many international instruments designed to regulate and minimize humanitarian harm from the use of Conventional Weapons.

At this time it is particularly urgent to explore how we can raise consciousness and strengthen compliance with International Humanitarian Law to prevent further civilian harm from the use of EWIPA. We commend the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross to highlight this challenge and we



support the recommendation of the United Nations Secretary General for States to engage constructively in efforts to develop a Political Declaration to address the humanitarian impact of the use of EWIPA. In line with our prioritization of questions related to gender and disarmament, Ireland has sponsored a study of the gendered impacts of EWIPA by Handicap International which we will launch as a side event on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October.

The international community has many successes to relate with regard to control of conventional weapons, including the Convention on Conventional Weapons, the Ottawa Convention, now 20 years old, the Cluster Munitions Convention and more recently the ATT. These signal successes in regulating, mitigating the use of or banning outright the use of inhumane weapons, or weapons with indiscriminate effects, represent the best of what can be achieved when the international community and civil society work together to establish these powerful norms. Nevertheless, despite an overall positive picture there are many elements of concern. The reports of civilian casualties from landmine use on the Myanmar- Bangladesh border are truly horrifying. Use of Cluster Munitions in Yemen and Syria is another cause for concern. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is fuelling conflict and violence in many fragile States and we must work to strengthen the UNPOA.

The ATT also has great potential to stem the illicit trade in conventional weapons but requires more resources if it is to operate effectively against the background of enormous increases in arms sales since its entry into force.

With respect to the challenges posed by increasing autonomy in weapons systems my Delegation is of the view that the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems should develop a working definition and discuss the application of and compliance with International Humanitarian Law, in accordance with the recommendations of the 2016 Group of Experts and the mandate of the CCW Review Conference.

These are matters to which we will return in the debate on Conventional Weapons.

Mr Chairman

A diversity of voices ensures a more multifaceted and a deeper discourse on disarmament matters. Ireland has encouraged for some years a more participative approach to Civil Society in First Committee and regret that, once again, this does not seem to have proved possible. Perhaps the recognition by

the Nobel Committee may assist us in this endeavour. Nevertheless we look forward to this week's Civil Society segment as an opportunity for a genuine and open exchange of views.

We are equally committed to increasing women's participation in disarmament and using women's agency as a positive force for change. Last year the UNIDIR research paper, Gender, Development and Nuclear Weapons showed that women's representation in Disarmament Forums lags far behind that of similar international bodies. It is our firm belief that greater diversity will make our Committee and its crucial work more effective and we will continue to advocate strongly for this. Ireland participates actively in the UNDP's sponsorship programmes, so that delegates from least developed countries can have the opportunity for their voices also to contribute to the decisions taken in Disarmament forums.

Mr Chairman,

Our former Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave who died last week addressed the United Nations in 1956 when Ireland was a very young and new member of the United Nations. In that speech he said,

**“The Assembly represents the best hopes of (man) on earth...moral values.....are the business of this Assembly. And the very assertion of moral values by the representatives of world opinion is a force in itself...the hope of averting disasters lies in this Assembly, it is the future of (mankind) that is debated here.”**

Let us work together so that those hopes are realized.

Thank you