Statement by

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New York

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Mr. Chair,

First of all, allow me to start by congratulating you on your assumption of the chair. You and all the Bureau members can be assured of my delegation’s full support.

Croatia remains an active supporter of the UNDC. However, to say at the opening of the second substantive session of the current three-year UNDC cycle that we have high expectations from our meeting, would be an overstatement. We hope shall be proven wrong, but the fact of the matter is that the UNDC remains in a deadlock that looks more and more difficult to break with every year that passes by. This adds to the continuous decline in its relevance and overall decrease in trust the Member States have in its capacity to address today’s disarmament related challenges in a significant manner.

Having said that, we don’t want to imply that the UNDC has lost its meaning and place in the overall UN system. On the contrary – with its universal membership and consensus based decision making, the UNDC remains a body with untapped potential. But the problem UNDC is faced with goes beyond its operational scope.

UN disarmament machinery is plagued with the absence of progress and divergent views on some important matters with little or no prospect for the middle ground in foreseeable future. This is a problem that calls for an in-depth reflection and, if need be, new creative thinking.

Croatia – while chairing the Commission and a year after acting as a friend of the Chair – invested not a small amount of time and diplomatic energy to find avenues that would enable the way forward. One cannot say that we were very successful. Nevertheless, we shall continue advocating the full implementation of the Resolution 69/77 in the same diligent manner, with particular emphasis on more focused agenda items.

Croatia continues to see the merit of pursuing a more creative approach to the agenda. We strongly believe that through the inclusion of a third agenda item deliberations would be uplifted, and a new, highly needed ground for potential success would be formed. It seems that third agenda item, possibly on outer space matters might be within our grasp and we should spare no effort to seize it. We also encourage the Commission to make a meaningful use of the UNIDIR’s expertise in its substantive sessions.

The UN Disarmament Machinery, including UNDC, should serve as an important tool for advancement in resolving issues related to nuclear disarmament. It is no secret that the main reason for unproductive status quo is precisely the nuclear portfolio. Regardless of the tremendous efforts invested, including during the 2015 NPT review conference, the final result was short of the desired one.
We are of the opinion that a process that can effectively lead us to a world free of nuclear weapons can only be an inclusive one. It must leverage the existing global regime, in particular the NPT. The Treaty provides the necessary foundation (including its previous consensus documents such as the 2010 NPT Action Plan and the 13 practical steps to disarmament) treaty-level commitments on the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons, including as outlined in Article VI.

In our opinion, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes. Strengthening the non-proliferation regime of nuclear weapons is essential prerequisite for our future without nuclear weapons.

Another example is securing the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) which will reinforce the global norm against nuclear testing, but will also advance key disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

Also due attention should be given to the efforts to establish the Middle East Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction. New impetus and creative ideas are called for to bring all relevant parties to the table, in full respect for their legitimate interests. This is essential not only for the long-term strategic stability of the Middle East, and beyond, but also for unlocking parts of the blocked UN disarmament machinery, including UNDC.

When it comes to the conventional weapons, Croatia values the role and importance of practical confidence-building measures in this field. They play an important role in promotion of understanding, transparency and cooperation among States and, therefore, enhancement and maintenance of regional and international peace, stability and security.

Traditionally, Croatia has been actively engaged in global humanitarian disarmament. And we attach great importance to conventions prohibiting anti-personal landmines and cluster munitions. Last year Croatia hosted the First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and we look at the successful outcome of it with a great pride. We also introduced the resolution on the same topic that was adopted at the GA.

We wish to underline the significance of the first legally binding instrument on arms trade and, by addressing the illicit and non-regulated trade in arms, its contribution to worldwide prevention of armed conflict, armed violence, and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.
Mr. Chair

We should invest all the effort required to fulfil the mandate that was given to the UNDC. In that sense, we are willing to work and to do our best to overturn current unfortunate trend and finally reach the consensus that will lead to relevant recommendations and guidelines to the General Assembly.

UNDC deliberations, guidelines and recommendations do have the potential to result in concrete actions and to make a difference in the world by tackling extremely complex security challenges. By failing in reaching the consensus and fulfilling the Commission’s mandate, we are at constant loss. There is too much at stake - it is matter of our collective security.

It is about time that we find a way to make the Commission work as it is supposed to, and right here and right now should be the right occasion to start.