GEORGIA

Disarmament Commission
2016 substantive session General Debate

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Statement by Mr. Giorgi Kvelashvili, Senior Counsellor

Mr. Chairman

On behalf of the Georgian Delegation, please, allow me to congratulate you and the Government of Vanuatu on your election to the Chairmanship of the 2016 Session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Mr. Ambassador, the Georgian Delegation looks forward to working with you as you discharge your important duties. We wish you and the other members of the Commission’s bureau a successful session, and we also thank the Secretariat for their valuable support and contribution to our work.

Mr. Chair, Excellencies,

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, related materials and technologies, as well as the risk of nuclear terrorism represent a serious threat to human security. This problem is global and asymmetrical in its nature and it requires a high level coordination and cooperation both regionally and internationally. In this regard, full compliance with the obligations under the relevant International arrangements, such as NPT, CWC, BWC, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, etc. must be viewed as the main priorities of the International Community.

Georgia continues to see the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty as the core component of the global disarmament and nonproliferation architecture, and we believe that the credibility of the NPT lies in the effective implementation of its mutually reinforcing pillars.

We have adopted the new “Law on Radioactive Waste,” and strengthened the state control over nuclear and radiation safety and security. Also, Georgia has formed a new Agency for Radioactive Waste Management which covers both centralized storage and disposal facilities. In collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Agency, we approved the 2015-2019
Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan (INSSP), and elaborated a national strategy and action plan to reduce chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risks.

In cooperation with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the Government of Georgia organized high-level side events in October 2014 and 2015 on topics related to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) risk reduction. In December 2015, Georgia, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of the Philippines, as co-chairs, established the UN Group of Friends of CBRN Risk Mitigation and Security Governance aimed to promote various CBRN-related topics in the United Nations by actively engaging with Member States and the UN Secretariat. The Group will help integrate the CBRN component in the international security architecture and foster regional and sub-regional cooperation on CBRN challenges. As we are preparing for our second meeting at the Ambassadorial level tomorrow, we once again encourage the other Member States participating in the European Union’s CBRN Centres of Excellence Risk Mitigation Initiative to join the Group.

Mr. Chair,

We regret that such an important component of the international security dimension as the Conference on Disarmament continues to fail to effectively fulfil its mandate. In our view, CD should exercise a significantly greater influence and produce a larger impact in the field of its competence, especially in view of the deteriorating international security environment. To match this objective, we all have to spare no effort in order to promote revitalization of this unique forum for negotiations, which has played a crucial role in the past in elaborating several major international disarmament and non-proliferation instruments.

Georgia together with other Member States of the UN was a co-sponsor of the process launched in December 2006 which was aimed at developing a legally-binding Arms Trade Treaty. We signed this milestone document on 25 September 2013 and ratified it in December 2015.

Mr. Chair,

Throughout the recent years, there have been many discussions questioning the adequacy of the existing security arrangements with the 21st century requirements.

We partially share this view. However, taking into account the universal nature of the fundamental principles upon which the security architecture rests, we are confident that the main problem is rather related to the unwillingness of certain countries to strictly comply with their obligations rather than with the imperfection of the system itself. The non-compliance can irreversibly erode the current security system and produce large-scale negative implications. This is exactly what we are witnessing today. Security assurances provided to Ukraine under the Budapest Memorandum in connection with the latter’s accession to the NPT have been ignored. The Russian Federation, one of the guarantor states, has openly challenged territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. This is an extremely dangerous development that threatens to have far-reaching negative implications, inter alia, on the process of nuclear disarmament and
The ongoing occupation of Ukrainian territories, where nuclear facilities and materials are located and lack of legitimate control is another challenge to the international security.

Mr. Chair,

The Ukrainian case is not the only case in which Russia remains in serious breach of the UN Charter and other treaties under international law. In August 2008, the Russian Federation launched a large scale military aggression against Georgia which resulted in occupation of more than 20 percent of the Georgian territory.

The illegal military occupation of our sovereign territory, in violation of the six-point Ceasefire Agreement of August 2008, represents a serious threat to regional and international peace and security. It creates a fertile ground for all sorts of illegal activities including the CBRN proliferation, accumulation and illicit transfers of conventional arms, etc. In this connection, I would like to remind the distinguished audience that there have been several recorded attempts of smuggling nuclear and radioactive materials via the Russian-occupied Georgian regions and the international community has been duly informed about them.

Currently, there are around 12,000 Russian occupation troops stationed illegally in Georgia. In addition to the personnel build-up, Russia has fortified its military infrastructure in the occupied territories and deployed additional equipment to its military bases. The Russian infrastructure and equipment includes: military and naval bases, airfields, offensive weaponry such as tanks, armoured personnel carriers, “Grad” weapons, surface-to-air missile systems, multiple-launch rocket systems (so-called “Smerch” units), self-propelled howitzers, air defence systems, tactical-operational missile launch system “Scarab B“, also known as “Tochka U“, which can be equipped with conventional and nuclear warheads.

In addition to the establishment of the military bases, Russia is renovating old and developing new transport infrastructure in the occupied Georgian territories which will allow Moscow to move its forces and hardware more rapidly. Despite the direct call of the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire agreement to withdraw to the pre-war positions, over the years, the Russian military forces have expanded the occupation zone and installed razorwire military fences and other artificial obstacles along the occupation line to hinder people-to people contact and movement in both directions.

We fear that the Russian military build-up will further intensify as a result of the implementation of the so-called “treaties on alliance and integration,” signed between Moscow and its occupation regimes in Georgian territories. These documents represent a further step toward annexation of our regions.

When it comes to practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, what the Russian Federation has to do without any further delay is to fully comply with its
obligations under the UN Charter, the OSCE arrangements, including the Helsinki Final Act and Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, as well as with the commitments Russia undertook by signing the Budapest Memorandum and the August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement. All of them require that the Russian Federation end its illegal occupation of the sovereign territories of Georgia and Ukraine.

Mr. Chair, Mr. Chair,

Bearing in mind universality of the fundamental principles of international law, we must agree that the existing system has not exhausted the potential to further facilitate and strengthen security and stability. But this requires firm political will and readiness to comply with international law. Otherwise, the process of erosion will become irreversible and will irretrievably undermine the existing security architecture.

I thank you.