Event marking the launch of the sale of disarmament publications at the book store of the United Nations Office in Geneva and celebrating the winners of the United Nations Posters for Peace Contest

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Amb. Van der Kwast,
Mr. Møller,
Mr. Douglas,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today. As you know, this event marks the launch of the sale of disarmament publications at UNOG’s bookstore and celebrates the winners of the UN Poster for Peace Contest.

The sale of the disarmament publications at UNOG’s bookshop is a commendable initiative by the Netherlands to make disarmament publications easily accessible in Geneva. I believe that this project is testimony to the contribution of the Netherlands, to support the work of the United Nations. It illustrates the Netherlands’ strong support and effective collaboration with the Office for Disarmament Affairs. The distinguished Ambassador Van der Kwast will tell you more about this project shortly.

I would also like to recognize Mr. Michael Douglas, UN Messenger of Peace. Michael, I can only reiterate my personal appreciation for your enthusiasm and relentless dedication to disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

I am sure you have noticed the 12 posters in this room, which represent the winning entries to the UN Poster for Peace Contest which was sponsored by the Office for Disarmament Affairs. This is the second time that the United Nations held such contest since the last one in 1982 at the time of the Second Special Session on Disarmament (SSODII). I am pleased to report that the UN Poster for Peace Contest attracted over 4,000 entries from 123 countries. It is encouraging to note the remarkable interest of ordinary citizens worldwide to participate in this Contest. My special thanks should also go to Michael Douglas as this event was made possible thanks to his generous contribution. My heartfelt congratulations to the Permanent Representatives present here whose nationals won the contest prizes of honorable mentions.

The awardees were announced at the event launched in New York on 3 May by the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and other dignitaries. In his remarks at that event, the Secretary-General noted how many young people entered the contest to use their creativity for an important global good. At that event he said, “Young people did not create nuclear weapons, but it may be their task to eliminate them once and for all.”
Following Geneva, this exhibition will be held in Vienna, another global disarmament hub on 13 June on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the CTBT. Then it will be shown on other continents, Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America through our regional centers.

We are gathered here today to celebrate education and the arts: two powerful mediums which have the potential to bring about change and shape public opinion. For this purpose, we will bring this exhibition to the whole world.

As Voltaire, this great city’s ancestor, once put it “We must cultivate our garden”. So we must choose wisely what to plant in the garden to make the world a safer and better place.

I want to thank you all for coming and showing your support and hope this art work will inspire you to redouble your efforts to move the disarmament agenda forward.