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Madam Chair, Ms Gabriela Martinic of Argentina

Mr Wilmer Mendez of Venezuela, Chair of Working Group One

Ms Lachezara Stoeva of Bulgaria, Chair of Working Group Two

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

Today is a momentous and happy day for the Disarmament Commission and the United Nations disarmament machinery. In reaching substantive agreement you have broken a nearly two decade old deadlock and helped to breathe life into what many considered an irreparably moribund process.

At the outset, I must congratulate all delegations for this achievement. I thank all of you for your flexibility and willingness to find common ground for the sake of our collective security.

I thank and congratulate you, Madam Chair, and your bureau for your hard work and leadership in bringing Member States together. I also thank Mr Mendez and Ms Stoeva, the chairs of Working Groups One and Two, for their tireless and persistent efforts.

Madam Chair

My personal thanks should go to Mr Mendez, Ms Stoeva and Robatjazi for their very kind words addressed to me and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the many former chairs that helped to make this happen, including Ambassadors Drobnjak of Croatia, Seck of Senegal and Tevi of Vanuatu.

The adoption by Working Group Two of the “Recommendations on Practical Confidence-Building Measures in the field of Conventional Weapons” is a positive and significant development not just for this body, but for the millions affected by armed violence around the world.

Confidence-Building Measures in the field of conventional weapons – those weapons used in every conflict across the globe – can contribute to easing tensions and building trust. They then will help us in our common efforts to resolve and prevent conflicts, and to facilitate the achievement of sustainable development.

Measures such as information exchanges and establishing channels of communication – especially face to face dialogue – are essential for reducing risks and better understanding mutual concerns.

Likewise, efforts to promote military constraint measures such as restrictions on exercises and troop movements will promote common security and foster an environment that reduces vulnerability.

Today’s world has been described by the Secretary-General as one “of new and old conflicts woven in a complex, interconnected web”. These measures can help untangle that web.
The international community now looks to all Member States to ensure the effective application of these Confidence-Building Measures. The UN stands ready to help however we can.

Madam Chair

I welcome the informal discussions you have held on the implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. I thank you, Madam Chair, for organizing these consultations. I also congratulate China, the Russian Federation and the United States for their initiative in proposing this item.

The unity of these three countries – the biggest space faring countries – on addressing this issue in the UNDC is doubly encouraging. First, given the vital importance of outer space for all countries, issues relating to its security merit consideration in a universal body. Second, given the strategic significance of outer space, the current global security situation and the slow progress in multilateral arms control, building upon the consensus on outer space TCBMs can positively spill over and bring benefits to other parts of the disarmament agenda.

I believe this is the best near-term path to pursue practical measures to prevent an arms race in outer space and to pave the way for more ambitious measures in the future.

The informal discussions represent an innovation in the UNDC’s working methods by allowing the Commission to conduct a trial run on a prospective agenda item. I thank all delegations for their flexibility in agreeing to this approach.

Delegations’ interventions identified many specific areas where further deliberations by the UNDC could move forward our common aspiration to keep space as a realm free of conflict. I am encouraged by the strong support for the UNDC to take up this issue in its next cycle.

Madam Chair

This year is a critical year for disarmament, with multiple important events. By breaking the deadlock in the Disarmament Commission, Member States have helped set a positive tone for the rest of this year’s events, with the commencement of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review cycle as the immediate next. I hope new positive impetus will be provided to make 2017 a year of action for a better world, one that is safer and more secure for all.

Last, but not least, on a personal note, I must thank all of you once again for making a breakthrough today and giving me a very memorable parting gift.

I thank you so much.