STATEMENT BY HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL:

THE GLOBAL EFFORT TO PREVENT THE PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION BY NON-STATE ACTORS

28 June, 2017
New York
Ambassador Llorenty Soliz, President of the Council,
Distinguished members of the Council,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Council and its President for holding the open debate today on this important topic.

The possibility of non-State actors, including terrorists, acquiring weapons of mass destruction remains a significant threat to global security, and the international community must step up its efforts to ensure that the disastrous scenario of WMD terrorism is avoided.

Since its adoption in 2004, resolution 1540 has played and continues to play a vital role in international efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and its delivery systems to non-State actors.

Substantial progress has been made over the past years by Member States in their efforts to minimize proliferation risks. However, we are increasingly witnessing new and even more complicated threats in this area.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my very brief remarks today, let me highlight three key issues in our joint efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors.

First, we need to closely examine the emerging nexus between rapidly advancing technologies and WMD in the globalized and connected world, and identify actions to grapple with its impact on non-proliferation.

While the globalization brings new opportunities for economic growth and development around the world, it also facilitates the rapid movement of materials, technologies, and the latest discoveries in science and technology, as well as of personnel with relevant expertise to use and exploit them with malicious intent.

These risks are ever changing. Terrorist groups evolve and spread their destructive ideologies in the cyber space, and illicit networks develop new tactics. Technology once perceived as the domain of military experts is now freely available to broader audiences. Non–state actors, including terrorist organizations, will exploit any loophole to obtain these technologies.
While there are still significant technical hurdles that terrorist groups need to overcome to effectively use weapons of mass destruction, a growing number of emerging technologies could make this barrier easier to cross.

Several new areas of concern have emerged, such as the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, 3-D printers and the exploitation of the so-called the Dark Web. The global reach and anonymity of the Dark Web provides non-State actors with new market places to acquire dual-use equipment and materials.

Dual-use is further complicating our efforts to address the risks posed by proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We must keep in mind that many of the technologies, goods, and raw materials required for developing weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery derive from legitimate commercial applications that benefit many people. Striking the right balance between commercial opportunity on the one hand, and our collective security and the need to prevent proliferation on the other hand, is important.

This brings me to my second point, which is the importance of international cooperation, and the need for continuous and enhanced dialogue with industry.

Emergence of countless suppliers, along with developments in international trade and sophisticated procurement networks make concealment easier, allowing illicit trafficking networks to circumvent national and international controls.

This means better international cooperation is essential if we are to prevent terrorist access and use of weapons of mass destruction. In the worst case scenarios where these weapons are used, seeking accountability is critical. The international community must uphold the norms that have been established in this area, and to prosecute those responsible for committing or supporting such acts.

My third point relates to the importance of national capacities in our joint endeavour to prevent proliferation. Recent terrorist attacks have revealed shortcomings in interactions among security agencies, even in countries whose policies are otherwise deeply integrated. Coordination and information-sharing will be vital to overcoming these shortcomings.

All Member States should further strengthen export controls, work to prevent any financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ensure the security of sensitive goods and materials.
It is clear that despite the undeniable success of the past 13 years we must remain vigilant – much remains to be done. The United Nations is fully committed to work with member states in this area.

I strongly encourage the Council to use today’s debate to be proactive and devise effective solutions to ensure full and universal implementation of Member States’ disarmament and non-proliferation commitments.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.