



First Plenary Session: Non-Proliferation and Disarmament: The Political Framework

**Remarks of High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu at the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference**

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Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak in this session on behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

I don't think I need to explain to anyone in this room that our common aspirations for disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control face serious challenges. The international security environment is in its worst state since the end of the Cold War. Key multilateral bodies remain stalemated. But more troubling, leadership in key States no longer seem to value the tools of disarmament and arms control as an indispensable means for ensuring international stability and national security.

This contrasts with the fact that the fundamental axioms that underpin our national and human security rest on the solid foundations of multilateral customs, norms, agreements, arrangements and institutions. These have brought real security benefits which we all enjoy and often take for granted, extending from the taboo against the use of weapons of mass destruction to the prohibition against making civilians the object of attack. The political framework for disarmament and non-proliferation thus remains strong and the international community continues to be virtually united in the need to preserve the rules-based international order.

Yet, multilateral security governance frameworks are increasingly under strain. Arms control agreements are being violated and abandoned. Norms against the use of weapons of mass destruction have been defied, so far with impunity. The toll of armed conflict on civilians has remained unacceptable, and continues to be a driver of humanitarian emergencies, migration crises and underdevelopment. Our multilateral institutions have struggled to keep pace with implications posed by developments in science and technology.

These are just some of the factors that motivated the Secretary-General to launch his Agenda for Disarmament in May of this year. I will give you just a brief overview of the agenda and highlights of the major initiatives we have already started with our partners across the United Nations system and beyond.

The first pillar of the agenda is disarmament to save humanity. It focuses on the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as on preventing the emergence of new domains of strategic arms competition.

Nuclear disarmament remains our top priority. The need for measures to reduce risks posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons is more urgent in a deteriorated security environment. Yet, without concrete action to implement past commitments, nuclear risks will grow in the face of constant modernization and the steady erosion of bilateral arrangements.

We will be working together with all interested States to promote action to reduce nuclear risks, enhance stability and increase international security in all available forums. In particular, the 2020 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will be a major opportunity to reconfirm the validity of the most universal instrument for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

On other weapons of mass destruction, developments in science and technology are giving rise to new concerns about the increasing likelihood of biological warfare. To address this potential threat, we are increasing our capacity and readiness to respond to any use within our existing mandates.

As we strive to address long-standing problems of the nuclear age, we must remain vigilant against the impact of new types of strategic weapons with potentially destabilizing effects. In this connection, we are actively supporting processes for the elaboration of new legal arrangements to prevent an arms race in outer space, as well as measures to implement transparency and confidence-building measures, including political measures and other norms of responsible behavior. We are also preparing a study on the implications of hypersonic weapons for disarmament, peace and security.

The second pillar of the agenda is disarmament that saves lives. It addresses the objectives of mitigating the humanitarian impact of conventional arms as well as excessive accumulation, insufficient regulation and illicit trade.

The increasing urbanization of armed conflict has resulted in devastating and well-documented impacts on civilians. To help reverse these trends, we will facilitate new efforts to rein in the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, through common standards, the collection of data on collateral harm and the sharing of policy and practice. We will improve interagency coordination to better help governments address the scourge of improvised explosive devices.

As we continue to support the progressive codification of humanitarian disarmament norms, we will also strive to integrate arms regulation into broader work for prevention and sustainable development. This should start with a new approach for supporting action at the country-level to end the illicit trade in small arms and their ammunition. Together with the Peacebuilding Support Office, we are establishing a funding facility to facilitate a more effective and holistic approach.

Other steps we are taking include embedding a deeper institutional understanding on the impact of the over-accumulation of arms in fuelling and prolonging conflict. We are working with States to ensure the security and physical protection of excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles. And we are promoting new cooperation and dialogue, especially at the regional level, to reduce military spending and build confidence.

The third pillar of the agenda is disarmament for future generations. It addresses our need to remain vigilant in our understanding of new and emerging weapon technologies that could imperil peace and stability, result in civilian harm, or strain existing legal frameworks.

One of our foremost objectives is to promote better understanding and awareness of the implications posed by developments in science and technology and their application to weapons. This includes the sharing of practice and outcomes of new weapon reviews conducted by States in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

In the face of growing autonomy in weaponry, new measures are necessary to ensure humans always maintain control over the use of force. We are supporting a coordinated approach across the various intergovernmental processes aimed at fostering a culture of accountability and adherence to norms, rules and principles for responsible behaviour in cyberspace. And we will be facilitating efforts to encourage responsible innovation by industry, engineers and scientists.

I would also like to highlight that the agenda includes a strong focus on ensuring the equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament. We are taking a number of concrete steps to this end, including revising selection procedures for disarmament-related bodies convened by the Secretary-General and making publicly available gender-disaggregated data on participation in multilateral disarmament meetings. Perhaps most importantly we will promote the incorporation of gender perspectives into all policies on disarmament and arms control.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Secretary-General's initiative is a disarmament agenda for the United Nations system. More than a dozen entities are leading and collaborating on the implementation of the 40 actions.

As the agenda was not legislatively mandated, we have been able to pursue a more innovative and dynamic approach to reporting on its implementation. The website for the implementation plan is a dynamic and transparent platform for monitoring and tracking the current status of various steps and activities.

This enables us to treat the implementation plan as a living document. As work progresses, new steps and activities will be added. On a regular basis, the status of activities will be updated and links to specific outputs will be uploaded.

The political and financial support of Member States will be essential for the successful implementation of the actions under the agenda. In this connection, we are grateful for the positive responses from Member States, including from the European Union and the six dozen other delegations who referenced the agenda during the First Committee, in their national capacity or on behalf of regional groups. We were also pleasantly surprised by the inclusion of references to the agenda in six resolutions.

As a token of our appreciation, we intend to publicly identify on the website those States, regional organizations and other partners that have stepped forward to champion or support various actions. These champions and supporters have committed to financially support, or politically support in a leadership capacity, activities in connection with the agenda.

We developed the Secretary-General's agenda to help create momentum and reinvigorate disarmament, and to support the joint work of the entire community. We will therefore also count on all of your support, which will be essential if we are to leverage our institutional capacity to facilitate your search for common solutions.

Thank you.