Statement by Ms. Elsa Haile, Director, UN and International Organizations Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea, during the 76th Session of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on Agenda Item: General Debate on International Security and Disarmament
New York, 5 October 2021

Mr. Chair,

I want to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your elections and assure you of my delegation's full support during our deliberations.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the distinguished representatives of Ghana and Indonesia on behalf of the African Group and Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chair,

Over the past half century the international security situation has undergone profound changes. Nations are more interconnected and interdependent. Weapons are produced on an unprecedented scale, and their killing power has become more deadly and indiscriminate. A growing consensus has emerged that views security as more than the mere absence of war, but a situation that enables societies to live without fear for their physical, cultural, economic and psychological well being. One cannot speak of security when global inequality is growing, millions are languishing in abject poverty, and societies are facing a constant assault on their culture. There is also a growing realisation that the possession of and the pursuit to acquire such weapons undermines regional security and stability.
There is a need to foster new thinking on international security. One that brings tackling the challenges of sustainable development to the centre of discussion, based on respect to the United Nations Charter, and breaks clean from the zero-sum security logic that still prevails. Fostering peace and safeguarding the security of all is a shared global responsibility. The plethora of challenges we face—terrorism, transnational organised crimes, pandemics and climate crisis—are interlinked. It does not recognise, nor is it hindered, by distances. And that no country acting alone can secure its citizens in the increasingly globalised world.

Eritrea underscores that regional and international security and disarmament issues are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, transparent, comprehensive and non-discriminatory instruments. Eritrea supports the various international instruments that aim at complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament covering all weapons. It is disconcerting that at a time that when more collective action is needed, we are witnessing the erosion of multilateral disarmament machinery. The Conference on Disarmament’s deadlock is a source of concern. The efforts to universalise disarmament are faced with constant challenges. Our shared future must compel us to demonstrate the necessary political will to agree on the core agenda and immediately commence the substantive discussions on disarmament matters.

Eritrea reaffirms its commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and its support of the various international instruments that aim at complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament covering all weapons.

Mr. Chair,

The existence of weapons of mass destruction continues to pose a significant danger to humankind. As it has been repeatedly reiterated, the sole guarantee against annihilation is a total and irreversible elimination of weapons of mass destruction—nuclear, biological, and chemical.

Eritrea reiterates its firm support for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects and expresses its concern over the slow progress towards their elimination.

The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegal and immoral. Legally binding negative assurances, the establishment of nuclear-free zones, the universalisation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the recently adopted Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons are critical steps to complete denuclearisation.
Eritrea believes that it is the inalienable right of all States to develop all aspects of nuclear science and technology for peaceful use without discrimination as long as it is consistent with the obligations under NPT. My delegation reiterates its strong support for the IAEA’s increased input and assistance to developing countries in the fields of nuclear power, nuclear safety and security and nuclear technology application. The free, unimpeded and non-discriminatory transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes must be fully respected.

Mr. Chair,

Conventional weapons, more than any other type of weaponry, are claiming lives and destroying socioeconomic progress. In addition, the increasing accessibility of small arms and light weapons are causing deaths and human misery in developed and developing countries alike.

The commercial and security interests of States are driving massive production of small arms and light weapons. The adverse effects of possessing these weapons by non-state actors are not limited to a specific country or region and will require regional and international solutions. A need for meaningful cooperation is critical to meet the complex and transnational challenge of conventional weapons.

Mr. Chair,

Eritrea is located in a region with a fragile security environment due to endogenous and exogenous factors. In the past half-century, the citizens of the Horn of Africa have endured conflict, extreme poverty, and displacement within and beyond their countries of origin. Achieving peace and addressing drivers of insecurity in the Horn of Africa therefore necessitates meaningful cooperation and engagement between constituting countries. It requires a multilateral, regional conflict mechanism that organically evolves to address the peculiar challenges of the region. The people of the region can address the causes of human insecurity if afforded policy space and international solidarity.

Eritrea believes international and regional security can only be realised through pacific settlements of disputes, adherence to the rule of law and global economic cooperation. We must go beyond regulation and disarmament to address factors contributing to and exacerbating conflicts such as underdevelopment, insecurity, weak states, and external intervention.
Disarmament benefits humanity not only because it eliminates threats to peace and security but also because it helps divert scarce material and financial resources to efforts that could improve humanity's living standards. It suffices to mention, in this regard, that the Sustainable Development Goals could be achieved by only a fraction of the amount spent on military expenditures by nations big or small. Let's direct our resources to improving the livelihods of all.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.