

United Nations General Assembly 76th Session
First Committee
New York, 5 October 2021

General debate

Statement by Finland

Mr Chair,

Let me congratulate you on your election as chair of the First Committee, and assure you of the full support of my delegation.

In addition to the statements by the European Union and the Nordic countries, allow me to make the following national remarks.

Mr Chair, dear colleagues,

The world is facing an intensifying great power competition. This is a competition between the most powerful and influential, but it has an impact on every nation.

The unravelling of international arms control system increases uncertainty and further exacerbates the situation. There is a serious risk for arms racing. We need to remedy the situation.

The key task is to uphold and strengthen the existing arms control architecture. In the current political climate, that in itself is a major task. At the same time, we need to think ahead and develop new solutions to respond to new challenges – both geopolitical and technological. Not all existing instruments fully reflect today's realities.

Mr Chair,

What are the most salient issues we face today?

For **nuclear arms** control, there is no substitute for agreements between the United States and Russia. We welcome the extension of the New START and we are encouraged by the renewed dialogue on strategic stability between the two biggest nuclear weapon states. It is also clear that inclusive engagement of China in strategic stability and arms control would be beneficial for global security.

The so-called non-strategic nuclear weapons are not covered by any arms control arrangement. These weapons pose a particular security threat in Europe. We would like to see any new agreement between the Russian Federation and the United States to cover and reduce the number of the non-strategic nuclear weapons.

We are hopeful that the postponed 10th NPT Review Conference will convene in January. The forced delay shall not diminish the pride that State Parties take in the success of the NPT. Nonetheless, we still have to fulfil our duty to take the Treaty and our commitments forward to full implementation, in particular article VI on nuclear disarmament.

We see particular value in promoting co-operation in nuclear risk reduction. Nuclear risk reduction is no substitute for nuclear disarmament, but can certainly advance it. Reducing risks for nuclear weapon use enhances security of all nations. A lot of work has been done in this respect, let me just mention the working paper for the NPT RevCon by the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament and the ongoing effort in the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative.

The CTBT is a core element of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The CTBT has been open for signatures for a quarter of a century and it is now time for this process to be completed. As a strong supporter and a member of the Friends of the CTBT Finland will continue working towards its swift entry into force.

As a firm supporter of the international treaty based system we are proud to be able to contribute to it as a member of IAEA Board of Governors for the next two years. Maintaining the integrity of the IAEA safeguards system, based on the NPT, is essential and we call on all its members to fulfil their commitments.

Regarding **chemical weapons**, our most urgent priority is to uphold the norm against the use of chemical weapons and to ensure that those that violate it are held to account.

We reiterate our unequivocal condemnation of the use of a chemical weapon in the attempted assassination of Alexei Navalnyi on the territory of the Russian Federation in August 2020. We yet again urge the Russian Federation to disclose and credibly explain the circumstances of this chemical weapons use and to comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

This April, the 25th Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention suspended certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. The decision follows the failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to respect its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We condemn the use of chemical weapons in the strongest possible terms. However, condemnation is not enough. Actions must have consequences. Those responsible must be held accountable.

The first step towards accountability is attribution. Over the past three years, the OPCW Investigation and identification Team (IIT) has diligently worked to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The IIT deserves our full support and respect for its professional, impartial and objective work.

Going forward, it is our duty to ensure that the OPCW has the support and resources needed to implement its mandate in full. Even then, final responsibility for achieving accountability rests with the UN Security Council. We are yet to see the Council fully shoulder this responsibility.

On **biological weapons**, we should use the momentum created by the COVID-19 pandemic to agree concrete measures to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. A first step should be to improve implementation of the confidence building mechanisms already in place under the Convention. Next, we should consider developing enhanced transparency measures, in order to increase trust and reduce the risk of dangerous misperceptions.

The upcoming Ninth Review Conference in August 2022 provides us with an opportunity to strengthen the implementation of the convention. We look forward to work with all State Parties in a constructive and collaborative manner to reach positive outcomes at the Ninth Review Conference.

The importance of the **space** domain has grown to become an integral part of our everyday life and infrastructure. It is essential that we continue discussions and further international cooperation on norms of responsible behaviour in outer space and appreciate last year's resolution in this regard.

The **digital domain** affects – and increasingly hosts – our lives in a fundamental way. Therefore, we must steer its use for good while curtailing its misuse, as pointed out by the Secretary-General in his Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. Digital spaces must be built on trust and on the universal values of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We must strengthen the norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace and hold States accountable when they deviate from these commonly agreed standards.

Raising the profile of **conventional arms control** is one of the many merits of the Secretary General's Agenda for Disarmament. On conventional arms, our task is clear: to ensure effective implementation of commitments made under the different instruments. In this, international assistance is often essential.

Finland is pleased to cooperate with UNIDIR on weapons and ammunition management and to support the valuable work of NGOs and civil society on small arms and light weapons, including by funding the UN Trust Facility, UNSCAR. We are also currently preparing a contribution to the new Salient Fund.

As a longstanding supporter of humanitarian mine action we welcome the ambitious Oslo Action Plan, and especially its strong focus on gender. Finland supports humanitarian mine action in Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine. Our support was nearly 2,9 million euros in 2020.

For the Arms Trade Treaty, promoting national implementation and the universalisation of the treaty remain key priorities. With 110 States Parties so far, progress on universalisation has been remarkable. Finland would like to encourage all States to join the Treaty.

The ATT has a pioneering role as regards gender-based violence. We are very pleased that the importance of combatting gender-based violence and mainstreaming gender are increasingly highlighted also in the implementation of other arms control instruments. This is a key part of implementing our commitments under Security Council resolution 1325.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda remains as relevant as ever – and is increasingly recognised as such also in the arms control sector.

Similarly, the role of young people deserves additional attention in arms control and disarmament, just as it does in the broader context of the UN's work on peace and security. Last month Finland prepared its first National Action Plan on the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security.

In the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on **Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems**, our aim is an effective normative framework, adopted by consensus by all parties to the process. It is an ambitious aim, but one that Finland will fully strive for. The 11 Guiding Principles are an excellent basis on which States can continue building a practical outcome.

We welcome the continuation of the work of the GGE. The aim is still to achieve concrete results this year. With patience and flexibility on all sides, we will be able to reach an outcome all parties can commit to. We should strive for nothing less.

Mr Chair,

With our overall objective in mind – strengthening the rules-based international system and the institutions that work to uphold it – we look forward to working with you and all delegations to make this session a success.

Thank you, Mr Chair.