Statement by

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Mr. Chair,

I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chair of the First Committee and assure you of our cooperation.

Latvia fully subscribes to the statement delivered by the European Union and I would like to deliver a few remarks in a national capacity.

Mr. Chair,

Let me begin by expressing solidarity with those who have lost their loved ones due to the pandemic. This crisis has affected us all and profoundly impacted the world.

However, despite the toll of the pandemic and its myriad of difficulties, the rules-based international order continues to ensure global peace and development. It is a proof of its worth and ability to endure, but it’s also a reminder that we need to strengthen it amid efforts to undermine it. For this reason, we support the call expressed by the Secretary General in his report “Our Common Agenda” regarding the need to ensure effective implementation of the international law.

Mr. Chair,

Latvia views verifiable and effective treaty-based nuclear arms control and disarmament as central to global security. Not operating in a political vacuum, we must consider the security reality, which includes military exercises that are far from transparent and selective implementation or even blatant disregard for existing instruments. We must also consider how the strategic environment is impacted by emerging and disruptive technologies. Therefore, Latvia supports a progressive “step-by-step” approach to nuclear disarmament. Our ultimate goal remains the same – to ensure that future generations can prosper in a world without nuclear weapons.
To this effect, we welcome the extension of the New START treaty and encourage the United States and Russia to continue their strategic dialogue. China should also join such discussions.

Mr. Chair,

The Non-Proliferation Treaty remains a cornerstone of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. We await the upcoming Review Conference as the appropriate platform for meaningful discussions on the most pressing nuclear proliferation and disarmament matters.

Much has been accomplished in the five decades since its adoption, yet more work remains. We must implement the useful framework of the 2010 Action Plan to fulfill both the letter and the spirit of the NPT.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty are two long-standing necessities. The entry into force of the CTBT is an essential tool for advancing nuclear disarmament. Thus, we urge remaining states, particularly Annex 2 countries, to join the overwhelming consensus against nuclear testing.

The DPRK’s nuclear weapons programme remains an unacceptable violation of international law, despite diplomatic efforts. DPRK needs to immediately engage in complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.

Despite efforts by the EU and the IAEA, Iran has repeatedly reduced its commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Latvia expresses deep concerns over Iran’s actions and calls for immediate resumption of verification and reporting activities and for the talks in Vienna to continue.
Mr. Chair,

Even though biological weapons represent an existential risk, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention suffers from a persistent lack of funding, requires further universalization and its implementing body has to be vastly expanded and strengthened.

On chemical weapons, the last few years alone have provided numerous examples of horrific crimes perpetrated in clear breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Latvia condemns the use of chemical weapons; these heinous threats to international security should not be tolerated and must have consequences.

Mr. Chair,

Conventional weapons proliferation, compounded by COVID-19, has resulted in suffering around the globe. Latvia stresses the importance of preventing the spread of illicit arms. Latvia undertook the role as vice-chair of the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We also remain actively engaged within the Arms Trade Treaty, consistently support its universalization, and continue to advocate for the full implementation of the ATT Action Plan on gender and gender-based violence.

Likewise, our support for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda remains steadfast and we firmly believe in the close link between global security and the equal participation of women. Latvia is determined to promote this goal as a member of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2022.

The pandemic illustrated our reliance on information and communication technologies. Even though it gave rise to amazing technological solutions, it was also targeted by malicious actors.
Latvia underlines the importance of an open, free, stable and secure cyber space, where fundamental freedoms and international law are fully respected and upheld. We view these as guiding principles for further discussions and efforts on cybersecurity within the OEWG.

Mr. Chair,

This devastating crisis exposed our vulnerabilities. However, it also illustrated our priorities and showed our strengths. We might not completely escape such existential risks, but we can prepare and ensure that our global civilization endures, advances and flourishes.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.