Statement by
Her Excellency Ms. Thilmeeza Hussain,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations,
at the First Committee General Debate

05 October 2021, New York

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

1. The Maldives delegation congratulates you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to the Chairmanship of the First Committee. I assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation, as you steer the work of this committee.

2. I would also like to align with the statement made by distinguished Representative of Indonesia on behalf of NAM.
Mr. Chairman,

3. Today we meet under extraordinary circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to millions of fatalities, endangered the lives of many more, and we still await the true economic scorecard. Yet the pandemic's impact is broad enough to even be felt on the global security environment, where increasing polarization and depletion of trust between states has led to levels of deterioration that belong to a bygone era. This is deeply concerning, and negatively affects the global disarmament agenda.

4. Global disarmament is a collective effort, and the ultimate way to preserve the advancements that we have achieved through multilateralism and adherence to international law. The fundamental purpose of the United Nations, stated in the first article of the Charter, is to maintain international peace and security, and to negate threats to peace, by peaceful means. Only the United Nations provides the necessary universality, trust-building mechanisms, avenues for dialogue and mediation that can facilitate the advancement of the global disarmament and non-proliferation agendas.
Mr. Chairman,

5. Nuclear weapons are not benign instruments. We do not require our imaginations to understand the brutality that lies behind - we have terrible and vivid examples within our collective living memory. Even when dormant, they are unthinkable security threats. They require expensive and constant monitoring and maintenance. They leave no room for human error, in their handling, transportation, and protection.

6. The Maldives has long been an advocate of UN-led efforts on disarmament. We are among the original signatories of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Like many across the world, we were pleased to celebrate its entry into force in January of this year. We urge those states who have not yet ratified the Treaty, to do so as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

7. The Maldives is not a manufacturer of weapons, nor do we have any aspirations to become one. We believe that security and strength are achieved through investing in the well-being of our people, our environment, and our relationships - rather than investing in military arsenals. Yet, like all nations, our security is also contingent on the actions of others. Weapons of mass destruction persist in the global community, posing an existential threat to our ability to trust
and cooperate with one another. To this end, the Maldives has acceded to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the UN Arms Trade Treaty, so as to record our voice, and join the others in calling for an end to weapons to save innocent lives and our shared humanity.

8. As we face a situation of development aid magnitudes that is less than what is required to build resilience to climate change and other threats, we note the vast imbalances between defence and development budgets in most countries. While we collectively have enough wealth and resources to house, feed and ensure a life of dignity for all, it is unfortunate that the world continues to divert tremendous resources to the production and maintenance of weapons, leaving basic needs such as food, health, education, and environmental greatly compromised.

9. As highlighted in the Secretary-General’s agenda for Disarmament, the link between peace and development is clear and well-established. The proliferation of weapons makes the world less safe and peaceful. It hinders our progress in achieving the SDGs, particularly those relating to peace, justice and strong institutions, reduced inequalities, economic growth, health, gender equality, and safe cities and communities.

10. Therefore, we continue to urge all countries to forgo spending billions on arsenals that only create a false sense of strength and security. Instead, this
moment demands that we funnel those resources into sustainable development, addressing the climate crisis and solving emerging challenges such as vaccine accessibility, and at the same time rebuilding our economies after the COVID-19 pandemic. These investments will endanger the true security that we all seek.

Mr. Chairman,

11. The Maldives reaffirms our belief that disarmament and non-proliferation make the world safer, more prosperous and better prepared to tackle twenty-first century challenges. We call upon all states to continue to work together with full and unwavering commitment to achieve our disarmament goals, and to build a world that is just, peaceful, and sustainable.

Mr. Chairman,

12. The international community has a moral responsibility to the current and future generations to take concrete steps to rid our world of nuclear weapons. This Committee, as a forum for all relevant stakeholders to meet and discuss paths forward, holds a heavy responsibility to address all issues concerned with a renewed sense of commitment and urgency.

I thank you.