STATEMENT BY DELIVERED BY MR SHUAIB MAHOMED, FIRST SECRETARY AT THE SOUTH AFRICAN PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA DURING THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON THE DISARMAMENT MACHINERY HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2018

Chairperson,

While we recently joined the majority of States in the welcoming of the landmark adoption of the TPNW, we are cognisant that such advances have not resonated in all fields of nuclear disarmament. Regrettably, South Africa remains concerned at the continuing paralysis in the UN disarmament machinery. The current impasse in the CD undercuts its credibility and raises doubts about the Conference’s continued relevance and continues to adversely impact the multilateral system of governance. It is South Africa’s view, that the continued stalemate in the CD is unsustainable. The CD was established for the purpose of conducting multilateral disarmament negotiations. Anything short of this objective means that the Conference is not executing its mandate.

Chairperson,

At the heart of the problem lies the continued resistance by a small number of States to implement their disarmament obligations and to subject themselves to the international rule of law. We would therefore do well to remind ourselves that while the Conference on Disarmament may be recognised as the multilateral institution responsible for the negotiation of international disarmament agreements, it is not the Conference’s limited membership that bears the cost of the United Nations resources that are being used while this prolonged deadlock in the CD continues.

On the contrary, it is the entire UN membership - namely CD members, as well as those countries that have not been included in the CD’s membership - which through their assessed contributions to the UN budget have to meet the costs for what has now become the Conference’s continued inactivity. All UN Member States therefore have a right to hold the Conference accountable for its failure to move forward on negotiations and to hold the Conference responsible for the resources that are being committed to sustain the functions of a non-functioning CD. It is South Africa’s belief that these resources could have been better used in the implementation of SDGs and other national programmes aimed at for example, eradicating poverty, which could have made a great deal of progress towards meeting the basic needs of people.

Notwithstanding, as a country committed to the resumption of substantive work in the CD, we have always exercised the greatest level of flexibility and we therefore remain ready to consider any proposals that would genuinely assist in breaking the impasse in the UN multilateral disarmament machinery. These bodies must be allowed to discharge their respective mandates in order to remain relevant. Negotiations are essential if we are to strengthen the international rule of law, which is key to promoting peace and security, where all countries are able to play by the same rules. Such negotiations are also vital if we are to achieve the requisite progress on nuclear disarmament that the world community seeks. In this regard, South Africa will remain actively and constructively engaged in the multilateral disarmament fora with a view to seeking solutions.

I thank you.