



**74th session of the United Nations General Assembly
First Committee
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**Statement by HE Yann HWANG
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to the Conference on Disarmament
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“GENERAL DEBATE”

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation congratulates you on your election as Chairperson of this 1st Committee and wishes you every success in this important task.

France associates itself with the statement of the European Union, and would like to make the following additional comments in its national capacity.

I. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, as well as their re-emergence in some theatres of operation, remains a major concern.

1/ The proven use of chemical weapons in Syria is unacceptable and constitutes an extremely serious threat to the entire non-proliferation regime. That is why it is essential that the resolution to be discussed again this year in the first committee be firm and substantial. On this subject, resignation is not an option. It is with regret that France has noted the paralysis of the institutions that should have made it possible to put an end to this crisis, in particular the Security Council, and to reaffirm the global ban on the use of these weapons. The strengthening of the OPCW through the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team, which we welcome, was therefore essential.

The use of chemical weapons has broken a fundamental taboo and it is essential that sanctions be taken to restore the credibility of the total ban on chemical weapons regime. It is in this spirit that France launched on 23 January 2018 an international partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons, now joined by 39 partners.

2/ On Iran, the Vienna Agreement, signed on 14 July 2015, is a robust agreement that strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It remains in force, and France is, with its European partners, fully committed to supporting its implementation, which must be rigorous and transparent, in all its provisions. France is very concerned about the latest Iranian announcements, which have been implemented. Iran must return to full respect for the JCPoA. We continue to work with our partners to achieve this. We strongly support the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which must continue its inspections making full use of its mandate.

Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorses JCPoA, must also be fully respected. Without prejudice to its support for the Vienna Agreement, France is seriously concerned about Iran's ballistic activities, which are not in compliance with resolution 2231. Iran continues to develop its national programme and increase the number of missile launches designed to carry a nuclear weapon and modernize its capabilities. Iran must also immediately stop the illicit transfer of missiles and ballistic technologies to state and non-state actors in the region, as required by UNSC resolutions.

Mr. President,

3/ With regard to North Korea, it must be noted that North Korea has not taken the necessary measures. Its nuclear programme remains operational, as indicated in IAEA reports. Its ballistic programme is in full development, as demonstrated by the repeated launches of ballistic missiles in recent months. No serious action has been taken to dismantle them, as required by Security Council resolutions.

We therefore call on North Korea to continue the dialogue and to engage in a concrete and structured process leading to its complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. We also call on North Korea to immediately stop all secondary proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, in accordance with the requirements of UNSC

resolutions. While North Korea is stepping up its efforts to circumvent sanctions, as shown by the various reports of the UN panel of experts on North Korea, we call on all our partners to fully implement the measures decided by the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. President,

4/ In the recent past, disarmament has too often been approached autonomously, if not disconnected from the security environment. To be effective, it must take into account contemporary military realities, technological breakthroughs, capability developments and new threats.

However, it was precisely in ignorance of the current context that the so-called "humanitarian" approach to nuclear disarmament led to the conclusion of the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty in July 2017. This treaty does not bind France and does not create any new obligations for it. Far from strengthening the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation architecture, it seriously undermines the credibility of the non-proliferation regime, which is fundamental to the current crises.

For France, as for a large number of States in Europe and Asia in particular, nuclear deterrence continues to play a role in preserving regional and international security and stability, and nuclear disarmament must therefore continue to make progress in the context of general and complete disarmament, without losing sight of the strategic context. It is therefore a priority to work on reducing strategic risk.

Mr. President,

5/ As President of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, France welcomes the quality of the work undertaken and hopes that this momentum will continue in the run-up to the 9th Review Conference. This forum has benefited from important substantive contributions that have made it possible to address important issues such as the persistence of the biological threat throughout the world, the changes in the pharmaceutical industry, and the rapid scientific progress linked to new technologies applied to the biological field. Given the danger posed by the biological threat, we must work for operational cooperation between

States Parties to the Convention. This is the objective of the French Presidency of the 2019 Meeting of States Parties.

In addition to the continued proliferation and re-emergence of the use of certain weapons of mass destruction, the worrying return of international strategic competition and the emergence of new forms of conflict must be highlighted.

These developments are accompanied by a direct challenge to international institutions and the standards that are supposed to govern the use of force. In Europe, the deconstruction of the security architecture inherited from the Cold War is a cause for great concern. To take just one example, the end of the INF Treaty and the expiry of the New Start Treaty in 2021 could lead us back to a situation of total absence of regulation of American-Russian nuclear competition, which we have not seen since the 1960s.

Today, the collective approach seems to be gradually fading away before the law of the strongest. It is the responsibility of all of us to deal with this situation.

That is why France and Germany launched the "Alliance for Multilateralism" on 2 April 2019, an informal alliance that already includes nearly 50 countries convinced that a multilateral order based on respect for international law is the only reliable guarantee for international stability and peace and that the challenges we face can only be solved through cooperation.

France has also decided to support several actions on the United Nations Secretary-General's agenda, covering the entire disarmament spectrum. Particularly concerned about the questioning of the prohibition of chemical weapons and the potential danger posed by biological weapons, France has taken on the role of champion for actions 9, 10 and 11 of the UNSG agenda.

II. Now, Mr President, I would like to turn to the major upcoming events.

1/ The NPT Review Conference will be held in spring 2020. In a deteriorated international context, it is crucial to reaffirm, without ambiguity, the authority of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in its three pillars.

The United States and Russia, which still hold nearly 90% of nuclear arsenals, must continue their efforts to reduce stocks. This involves extending the New Start Treaty in 2021 and negotiating a successor treaty between the two countries. The negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a fissile material cut-off treaty, based on the so-called Shannon mandate, is essential to exclude the risk of a resumption of the arms race. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty also remains essential: it is the necessary lock to prevent the development of new weapons. Finally, work on nuclear disarmament verification, strategic risk reduction, negative security assurances and transparency are also important to build confidence between nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States.

We must, within the framework of the NPT, respond firmly to nuclear proliferation crises, including by strengthening the effectiveness and universalization of the IAEA safeguards system and combating proliferation flows. We must also continue to promote the responsible and sustainable development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, under the best conditions of safety, security, non-proliferation and respect for the environment.

Finally, we must continue to work towards the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East, provided that the process is conducted in an inclusive and concerted manner.

2/ In the field of conventional armaments, the international community must mobilize more, with the support of civil society, to make progress in the concrete implementation and universalization of existing instruments. We must do our utmost to ensure that the Arms Trade Treaty becomes a truly global treaty. The implementation of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons must continue, particularly on the prospective issue of autonomous lethal weapons systems or improvised explosive devices. My country will continue to provide all the impetus and expertise necessary to make progress on these issues. Finally, the United Nations Programme of Action on SALW should make it possible to mobilize States against the scourge of the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons, in particular by combating their diversion to criminal and terrorist groups.

Mr. President,

3/ The civil and military uses of outer space and cyberspace offer important development opportunities, but also pose many security challenges.

Today, space is at the heart of a strategic and industrial competition that affects both civil and military applications. There is a greater need than ever to ensure the safety, security and long-term viability of space activities. France actively participated in the working group on the long-term sustainability of space activities, as well as in the group of governmental experts in 2018-2019. It continues to promote increased engagement to achieve standards of responsible behaviour in outer space, including the prohibition of the intentional creation of long-lived multiple debris that jeopardizes the safety of activities in outer space and, in so doing, the benefit of peaceful uses for all. It also continues to promote transparency and confidence-building measures.

In the cyber domain, the GGEs in which France participated in 2010, 2013 and 2015 made it possible to agree on important standards and recommendations concerning the applicability of international law to cyberspace and the responsible behaviour of States in this field. This normative work to strengthen international stability and security in cyberspace must continue among all actors. This is the objective that France will pursue within the framework of the new GGE and the OEWG, whose first discussions began in September. However, in this field, States cannot do everything and the contribution of private actors and civil society is essential. That is why France launched the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace on 12 November 2018. This is the first resolutely multi-stakeholder diplomatic initiative. The community of supporters of the Paris Call promotes values and principles calling for responsible behaviour by everyone in cyberspace. We want an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful cyberspace for all, in which the application of international law and fundamental freedoms is promoted and in which human rights are protected.

Finally, Mr. President,

Durable solutions will have to be found to the difficulties in financing disarmament conventions and other instruments, which have deprived us of several important meetings in the past. In this regard, we fully support the personal efforts of the High Representative and UNODA officials. We will also remain vigilant to ensure that the requirements of multilingualism remain respected.

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To conclude, this 74th session of the 1st Commission of the UNGA opens once again in a difficult context. Our experience has shown us, however, that serious efforts at negotiating in good faith enable to make progress in consolidating the architecture of law and collective security, on which international peace and stability are based.

In this perspective, France is convinced that more transregional dialogue is needed. It is incumbent on us to move away from the logic of stigmatization and to return to the demanding path of consensus, which is at the very foundation of effective multilateralism.

Thank you very much. /.