STATEMENT BY

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AT THE

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AND
RELATED INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS

New York, October 12, 2015
Mr. Chairman,

My delegation warmly congratulates you and other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election. We have confidence in your able leadership of this Committee and wish to assure you of our support and cooperation in the discharge of your onerous duties.

Ghana associates herself with the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

Mr. Chairman,

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II. The repercussions of the bombings are still felt today, and the continued possession and stockpiles of nuclear weapons remain a serious threat to human existence. The risks to present and future generations are heightened by the fact that the already bloated nuclear arsenals of nuclear weapon states, containing the most destructive explosive weapons ever created, are being further modernized and upgraded and it is a matter of grave concern that these weapons remain the only weapons of mass destruction not yet explicitly prohibited under international law.

The elimination of nuclear weapons has been on the agenda of the United Nations since its establishment. Yet the prohibition of nuclear weapons and serious commitment to multilateral negotiations towards their elimination has eluded us. There is, therefore, an urgent need to reinforce the principles of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which remains the only multilateral treaty with binding commitments for nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

Ghana shares the view that the NPT remains critical for nuclear disarmament and its strengths in terms of its universality, legal commitment and safeguards for the
development, acquisition, possession and use of nuclear weapons compel us to address its challenges.

We acknowledge the fact that the NPT, with its inherent shortcomings faces significant challenges in holding nuclear weapon states to their legal obligations and undertakings under the Treaty and that the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament and failure to meet interim objectives under the “step-by-step” agenda are a matter of concern. We are equally disappointed that this year’s NPT Review Conference could not agree on a final document. However, we must not allow the near inaction of nuclear weapon states to resolve differences and move towards the dismantling of nuclear weapons to dampen our commitment, but rather resolve to seek new and innovative approaches to bridge differences, build confidence and transparency going forward. The importance of the NPT in the quest for nuclear disarmament remains paramount and demands a renewal of commitment to its objectives.

Mr. Chairman,

Ghana is encouraged by the fact that the NPT has engendered a change in the discourse around nuclear disarmament and brought into sharper focus the humanitarian impact of the use of nuclear weapons and seriously questioned their security and prestige value.

We subscribe to the Humanitarian Pledge issued on 9th December, 2014 at the conclusion of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. The total of 119 member states including my country, which have endorsed this Pledge, should not allow the momentum generated after the Conferences in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna to die down in view of the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapon detonations. We urge continued dialogue on this matter and the beginning of a diplomatic process that could lead to negotiations on a legally-binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons, taking due cognizance of humanitarian as well as legitimate security considerations of all parties and stakeholders.
In this regard, Ghana shares the view that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) offers a hope of halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons and could thereby make an important contribution to total nuclear disarmament. We welcome the recent ratification of the CTBT by Angola and renew our call on Annex II states that are yet to ratify the CTBT to fast track the process of ratification.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreed between Iran and the E3+3 in Vienna on 14th July, 2015. We urge parties to the JCPOA to implement the plan in good faith as a true measure of its success. The JCPOA gives us hope that with dedication and focus, we can also resolve other seemingly intractable challenges, particularly in relation to the convening of the Conference on the Establishment of a Zone Free from Nuclear Weapons and All Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East.

In this regard, we reiterate the concerns expressed on behalf of the African group and renew our call on all interested parties, particularly states in the Middle East to engage in a spirit of mutual understanding and constructive engagement. We maintain that the establishment of a nuclear free Middle East is of crucial importance and urge progress in the parameters for the convening of the agreed Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

A Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) is a sine qua non to a world free of nuclear weapons. Ghana, therefore, welcomes the consensus report of the Governmental Group of Experts on a treaty banning the Production of Fissile Material for Nuclear and other Explosive Devices. We support the view that the report and recommendations should serve as a basis for future negotiations on a possible FMCT, ideally, under the auspices of the Conference on Disarmament (CD).
It is, however, disturbing that the CD, which is the sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations, rests in paralysis as it has for some time now failed to reach consensus on a programme of work and thus to commence substantive deliberations. The failure of the CD to move the global disarmament agenda forward undermines the important role it plays in international security. We once again urge the CD to show leadership and carry out its mandated functions.

Mr. Chairman,

The recent alleged use of chemical weapons, i.e. the use of mustard agents in mortar attacks by ISIS, should be a matter of great concern to the international community. We must, therefore, renew our commitment towards the development of both bilateral and multilateral strategies to prevent the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors, particularly terrorist groups.

To this end, the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 is essential. I am pleased to inform you that the Government of Ghana has extended an invitation to the Experts supporting the work of the 1540 Committee to visit Accra from today the 12th to 15th October, 2015 to assist in preparing a National Implementation Action Plan. We are grateful to the Committee for the assistance.

As we proceed to the fourth Nuclear Security Summit scheduled for next year in Washington DC, we urge nuclear weapon states to show leadership and prevent nuclear terrorism. It is our expectation that that Summit would lead to concrete outcomes on minimizing the use of highly-enriched uranium, securing vulnerable materials, countering nuclear smuggling and deterring, detecting, and disrupting attempts at nuclear terrorism.

Mr. Chairman,

The illicit transfer, excessive accumulation, and misuse of Small Arms and Light Weapons in many regions of the world pose a threat to international security. Given the scale of harm and instability that Small Arms and Light Weapons have caused in Africa, they have aptly been described as the true “weapons of mass destruction”, particularly in Africa.
Ghana, therefore, remains committed to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in all its Aspects and join other member states in calling for the full and effective implementation by states of the Programme as well as the 2005 International Tracing Instrument, at the national, regional and international levels.

We join in acknowledging the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the successful convening of the First Conference of State Parties (CSP1) in Cancun, Mexico this year. The Treaty is indeed a significant achievement and an important step in advancing security and improving accountability, responsibility and transparency in international arms transfers. We urge all member states to support the implementation of the ATT and to extend technical, financial and material assistance to developing countries to enable us to fulfill and implement the Treaty’s obligations.

Mr. Chairman,

In recent times, threats in cyberspace have risen dramatically. We, therefore, welcome the consensus report of the 4th Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. The report makes crucial contribution to the effort to build a more secure future in cyberspace.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I wish to recall the words of Ghana’s first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah at the 15th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 23rd September, 1960, that “armaments not only threaten the future of mankind, but provide no answer to the major problems of our age”. Fifty-five years hence, this statement remains relevant and perhaps even more poignant.

Situating this within the framework of the overarching theme of the 70th Session of the General Assembly and the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals, Ghana joins in the calls for a fundamental review of the links between
disarmament and development and the current excessive global military spending, estimated at US$ 1.8 trillion in 2014 in favour of the billions of people trapped in hunger, poverty and hopelessness.

Permit me to quote an important paragraph in the Atlantic Charter drawn up aboard the USS Augusta in Newfoundland by US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain on August 14, 1941 - “Sixth, after the final destruction of Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all men (and women) in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.”

Let us be inspired by these words to commit to action in the interest of humanity.

I thank you for your kind attention.