STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA

TO THE

FIRST COMMITTEE

DURING THE

GENERAL DEBATE ON

AGENDA ITEMS 88-105:
“GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT
AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS”

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Mr. Chairman,
My delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the position of Chair of this Committee and assures you of our full cooperation as you steer the deliberations, negotiations and decisions on peace, security and disarmament by the committee going forward.

My delegation also wishes to align itself with the Statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Nigeria on behalf of the African Group respectively.

Mr. Chairman,
Kenya believes that the world must be free of nuclear weapons. We have had a steadfast position on this issue through our commitment and advocacy for universal membership to the nuclear weapons treaties, such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty (NPT), as well as the regional nuclear-weapons-free zone security arrangements. Kenya has also been a strong advocate of multilateral diplomacy as a means of achieving non-proliferation, disarmament, and international security. However, despite the efforts expended by the global disarmament machinery to advance our collective nuclear security goals, the attempts have continued to flounder time and time again.

We wish to emphasize that in our view, discussions prioritizing some issues of the debate on prohibition of nuclear weapons such as the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) essentially mean that focus is diminished on other aspects which have equal importance. The conclusion of a comprehensive, transparent, irreversible and verifiable treaty on the elimination of nuclear weapons should remain the goal and priority of the international community.

Mr. Chairman,
We wish to recall our disappointment and needless to say, that of most members of the international community regarding the failure to make any progress in deliberations on nuclear disarmament during the NPT Review Conference held here earlier this year.

This lack of forward movement is reminiscent of the continued deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) regarding the nuclear disarmament agenda. The lack of consensus on a programme of work for the nineteenth year running and hence continued failure to make any headway in structured and substantive discussions on the core items in the CDs Agenda is regrettable.

While we, as well as most other states continue to emphasize the role of the CD as the global community’s single multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament, it is not surprising that there have been increasing calls to involve Civil Society in the deliberations of the CD (and might I add also in those of the First Committee), to bring in fresh perspectives there that may jog some of the intractable positions that have held it hostage for years.

If this stalemate, as well as lack of political will by some member states continues to persist, then we must consider the gains that could be achieved in including the voice of civil society if we are to fulfill the commitment entrusted to us to build a safer and more secure world for the current and future generations. In that regard, we note the positive efforts so far made through the convening of the first-ever Informal Civil Society Forum on the Conference on Disarmament by the then Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal
Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Conference in Geneva in March 2015.

The sense of frustration with the inertia by states in achieving any progress in nuclear disarmament talks is also growing as people around the globe endeavor to inspire, pressure, or persuade their governments to initiate negotiations for a treaty banning nuclear weapons. This is the reason for the increasing clamour for deliberations on nuclear disarmament to be taken outside the established frameworks in a process that is open to all and blockable by none.

This call is further strengthened by the concern about the Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Kenya continues to express its own apprehensions about this issue, as while no country in Africa possesses nuclear weapons, the continent would not be shielded from the effects of nuclear weapons. Indeed, the effects would have a particularly devastating impact on Africa due to limited resources available for building preparedness and response capacity. However, even for the developed countries, no amount of preparation could ever make any country capable of withstanding the devastating immediate and long term impact of a nuclear explosion on its people.

The discourse on the prohibition of nuclear weapons therefore needs to move beyond discussions about deterrence and nuclear doctrines, it must transcend politics and turn towards pragmatism, it must move past the interests of a few nuclear weapon states and shift to a process where a majority of interested states can work together to put in place effective prohibitions against nuclear weapons.

Consequently, as a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons may not be within our reach through the established frameworks of the NPT and the CD, a graduated process to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons may be undertaken through other efforts mandated by the First Committee. Kenya signed the “Humanitarian Pledge” following the convening of the Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. My delegation now looks forward to working with like-minded countries on proposals and resolutions aimed at ending the Nuclear Weapons status quo that will be discussed in this session, including recognition of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons; commitments to fill the legal gap and taking multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations forward. We must stand ready to look for solutions through such frameworks and arrangements if we are to make any headway in the path towards eventual achievement of legally binding norms that will create a safer, nuclear free world.

Mr. Chairman,
The widespread availability of small arms and light weapons continues to be a serious concern in numerous countries globally. The possession of arms by lawless offenders, as well as gun violence has led to the destruction of livelihoods, impacted negatively on socioeconomic conditions, fed terrorist movements and resulted in other human suffering in various degrees.

Kenya itself has been a victim of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which have been utilized to carry out a number of terror attacks on our soil as well as engage in other criminal activities. These arms clearly find their way into Kenyan territory through illegal and unauthorized channels, as they do in many other countries. As the deaths and injuries resulting from these weapons in the hands of lawless offenders have continued to mount, so have arms traders, brokers and profiteers continued to increase their sales.
This situation calls for increased international cooperation to stem the problem. In that regard, we note the encouraging work the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is undertaking, including most recently, the deliberations and conclusions of the Second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts held in June this year and reiterate our commitment to its efforts. We also appreciate that the coming into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) has provided for amongst other issues, better management of small arms, particularly if it is genuinely implemented in terms of registry and monitoring measures. We welcome the fact that these two instruments together with the Sustainable Development Goal 16 (4) which seeks to significantly reduce illicit arms flows by the year 2030 have inherent complementarities which can substantially advance the cause of elimination of illicit small arms transfers.

However, there is still work to be done to strengthen the commitment of states towards fulfillment of the provisions and intent defined in these instruments and principles. It is therefore important for this committee to consider means to limit excessive production, accumulation and stockpiling of SALW by various arms producing states. We must work together to find means of completely stopping the flow of arms to non-State actors, such as militant groups and warlords in conflict prone countries, through appropriate measures including the effective implementation of the international tracing instrument.

Mr. Chairman,

We reiterate our concern about the continued advances being made towards the weaponization of Outer space, through the development of military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space, or targeting space based assets. This is a frontier that can provide immense communication, trade, scientific and other benefits for mankind and should be preserved and used in a spirit of cooperation for peaceful purposes only. Already, many developing countries are making advancements through the use of ICT in economic transactions and this is an area that is promising in terms of leveling the playing field for them with more developed economies. However, the continued militarization of outer space is inimical to the promotion of economic development, as well as disarmament and strengthening of international security.

We commend the efforts made so far to keep a critical focus on this matter through the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on transparency and confidence building measures. It is our view that peace and security in outer space can best be promoted through measures with appropriate and effective verification provisions to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects. We therefore add our voice to the call for joint collaboration towards the development of an International Code of Conduct on the Use of Outer Space, as a precursor to the negotiation of a treaty banning the placement of weapons in outer space.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, my delegation remains committed to working with member states to advance the interests of peace and global stability through the work of this Committee.

I thank you.