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**STATEMENT
BY THE
DELEGATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

AT THE 67TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST COMMITTEE
GENERAL DEBATE**

**UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK
11 OCTOBER 2012**

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Chairperson,

The past year has once again proved to be a slow one for international multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The Conference on Disarmament again could not agree on a Programme of Work, whilst negotiations to produce an Arms Trade Treaty also did not come to fruition. During the last few years, increasing attention has been focused on the future of the United Nations disarmament machinery. This has been the result of the continuing impasse in the relevant multilateral fora in securing progress on key disarmament priorities.

Virtually none of the institutions established in 1978 by the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament has been able to escape this predicament. The significant level of overlap, duplication and contradiction among the various First Committee resolutions on priority disarmament issues, as well as the continued divergence reflected in the votes on these resolutions, reflect the ongoing challenges facing the international community.

Chairperson,

Regarding nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, let me say that South Africa remains committed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as the foundation of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. We consequently view the successful outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference as significant. The 2010 Final Document reconfirms the validity of the agreements reached in 1995 and 2000, including the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. In this context, it also contains a number of important measures aimed at achieving our goal of a world free from the threat posed by nuclear weapons.

The challenge now is to ensure that these undertakings are turned into concrete actions that would restore confidence in the nuclear non-proliferation regime, which has been subjected to significant tensions during the last decade. Nuclear weapons are a source of insecurity, not security. They have no place in today's security environment and the humanitarian imperatives that underpin the need for their complete elimination demand a renewed determination by all States and members of civil society to permanently rid our world of the threat of annihilation.

The establishment of a Zone Free of all Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East also remains an issue of special significance to South Africa. In view of the importance that my delegation attaches to both Nuclear-Weapon and Non-Nuclear Weapon States working towards a world free of weapons of mass destruction, we wish to emphasise the importance of holding the Middle East Conference during the course of this year.

Chairperson,

The Chemical Weapons Convention this year marked the 15th anniversary of its entry into force. The 29 April 2012 deadline set by the Convention as the final extended deadline for the destruction of the chemical weapons that could not be met by the possessor States Parties rendered these States Parties unable to comply with their obligation to complete their destruction in accordance with the Convention. Another challenge remaining for the Organization which needs urgent and concerted efforts of all States Parties is that of universality of the Convention. States Parties

therefore need to redouble their efforts to encourage the States not party to the Convention to join it.

Regarding the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), my delegation welcomes the outcome of the 7th BTWC Review Conference that took place in Geneva during December 2011. This outcome ensured a number of positive, though modest gains in strengthening the implementation of the Convention in some important areas. While South Africa would have preferred a stronger outcome, we trust that States Parties would fully utilise the new intersessional process and measures agreed to during the Review Conference to advance the aims of the Convention and to strengthen its implementation.

Chairperson,

In view of time constraints, I will limit my remarks on conventional weapons to only three issues, namely the Arms Trade Treaty, the UNPoA on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

As we are all aware, the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in July of this year could not reach agreement on the terms of a Treaty. However, South Africa believes that great progress has been made towards reaching agreement and that a body of work exists in the form of the last text presented by the President of the Conference. We are of the belief that that text should form the basis of negotiations, should we be able to reach agreement to resume our deliberations for the successful conclusion of a strong and robust Treaty to regulate the global trade in conventional arms. We are of the view that in order to achieve a strong and robust Treaty in resumed negotiations, States should endeavour to enter these negotiations with an open mind, yet with realistic ambitions. Our focus should be on the trade in conventional arms and should not be side-tracked by extraneous issues such as possession and production.

Chairperson,

Whilst the ATT Conference ended in disappointment, we were very much encouraged by the fact that we were able to reach agreement on an outcome document at the end of the Second Review Conference (RevCon) on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons (UNPoA). This is an especially meaningful breakthrough given that the First RevCon in 2006 ended without agreement on its draft outcome document.

South Africa continues to attach great value to the phrase "in all its aspects" in the title of the UNPoA. This phrase implies that in combating the illicit trade, States should take special care by means of physical security, legal and administrative structures and instruments, as well as systems and arrangements that legally held and transferred small arms and light weapons do not enter the illicit trade.

Chairperson,

On the issue of cluster munitions, South Africa has on many occasions expressed its concern about the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions. As a Signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, South Africa is fully committed to the implementation of all its provisions. Accordingly, South Africa has endeavoured to play an active role in the work of the Convention, including serving

as "Friend of the President" on International Cooperation and Assistance. We are currently busy with internal processes, in accordance with constitutional requirements and procedures, to obtain parliamentary approval for the ratification of the Convention.

Chairperson,

Time unfortunately does not allow me to cover all the other important issues relating to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control during this General Debate statement. My delegation will therefore present more detailed views during the relevant debates on specific thematic issues that will follow during the course of the work of this First Committee.

I thank you, Chairperson.