



United Nations General Assembly, 67th Session
First Committee
General Debate

12 October 2012

H.E. Mr. Geir O. Pedersen
Ambassador/Permanent Representative

Mr Chair,

Norway would like to see a strong and effective United Nations, also in the field of disarmament. Civilians are continuing to suffer as a result of armed conflict. Vulnerable, poor and marginalised population groups are often victims of armed violence and organised crime. We have a responsibility to eliminate the weapons that cannot be used under international humanitarian law, and to prevent irresponsible and illegal arms transfers. We cannot continue to fail to fulfil this responsibility because of deadlocks and procedural obstacles.

The Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions demonstrate that it is possible to negotiate multilateral instruments that have an immediate humanitarian effect on the ground and that strengthen the protection of civilians. This is possible when there is a common sense of purpose across traditional groupings, when our work builds on the facts and realities on the ground, and when the representatives of states recognise, acknowledge and make use of the undisputed expertise and competence of humanitarian organisations.

Norway was pleased and honoured to be elected President of the Third Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions that took place in Oslo in September, with the active participation of close to 120 states, international organisations and civil society. We were particularly pleased that 30 states that have not yet signed the Convention chose to participate, thus signalling their interest in the issue. My delegation is also pleased to note the strong support that has been expressed for the Convention during this General Debate.

Norway considers the Convention on Cluster Munitions to be a highly effective international instrument with two equally important pillars; one corrective pillar, embodied in the operational articles on clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance, and one preventive articulated by the prohibition on any use at any time in Article 1 as well as the obligation to destroy

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stockpiles. We have observed since the Convention was negotiated how effective this stigmatizing effect has been. That said, we are deeply concerned about past and recent allegations of use, and States Parties must remain vigilant in our joint condemnation of any such use and in our efforts to clarify what has actually taken place.

Norway urges all states to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions and our common efforts to enhance the protection of civilians and strengthen international humanitarian law.

Mr Chair,

Norway is among those who remain very disappointed that we did not succeed in adopting an Arms Trade Treaty this summer. The General Assembly has previously recognised that the absence of commonly-agreed international standards for the transfer of conventional arms contributes to conflict, displacement, crime and terrorism, thereby also undermining peace, reconciliation, safety and stability. The negative humanitarian consequences of unregulated arms transfers are severe. Armed violence kills approximately two thousand people daily. We are disappointed that States could not agree that we should be obliged to deny arms exports in cases where there is a significant risk that the arms in question could be used to undermine peace and stability or violate international humanitarian law or human rights law.

There may be a new opportunity to continue and finalise our deliberations next year. If, however, this new ATT conference is also conducted according to rules of procedure that entail a requirement of consensus, we run the risk of repeating what happened in July. We have seen the consensus format watering down or paralyzing important disarmament processes time and again. The consensus requirement means that small minorities are able to prevent the adoption of international measures that could make a difference for civilians and vulnerable groups, and it continues to constitute the key reason why the UN disarmament machinery remains inadequate in facing the increasing challenges posed by the use of inhumane and indiscriminate arms and by arms proliferation.

While Norway welcomes the outcome of the Second Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and not least the very able leadership of Ambassador Joy Ogwu, it is a fact that stringent consensus rules prevent us from further strengthening this instrument.

Mr Chair,

Forty-two years after the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty entered into force, we are still living in a world with nuclear weapons. All countries have a responsibility to engage in nuclear disarmament. In this context, the current state of our multilateral disarmament instruments is a challenge to us all. There is a pressing need to develop new ideas and approaches if we are to achieve our common goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The draft resolution put forward by Austria, Norway and Mexico is an invitation to respond to this need.

The NPT Review Conference in 2010 did achieve concrete results in the form of the Action Plan. But only implementation of the Action Plan can bring us from diplomatic achievement to actual results. We are therefore pleased to note that the P5 countries are meeting on a regular basis to fulfil their obligations under the NPT Action Plan, and we look forward to seeing concrete and bold steps to this end by the nuclear weapons states.

One important item in the NPT Action Plan is the Middle East Conference on a Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction, to be held by the end of this year. More than half of the world's countries have freely joined zones of this kind, which underpins the simple fact that security is strengthened by not maintaining a category of devastating weapons that must never be used again.

Mr Chair,

Throughout the history of the United Nations, we have seen the humanitarian perspective gain strength in international politics and in relation to arms control. However, nuclear weapons have rarely been seen in this light. This may be about to change.

In March 2013, Norway will hold a conference in Oslo focusing on the impact of nuclear detonations, whatever their cause. The Conference will create an arena to discuss immediate humanitarian effects, longer term impact and consequences, and the actual state of preparedness to provide adequate humanitarian response in case of a nuclear detonation. We look forward to welcoming all states and relevant humanitarian actors that recognise the need to discuss the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons to Oslo in March next year.

Mr Chair,

We must all do our part to implement and further strengthen non-proliferation obligations. This includes implementing the IAEA comprehensive safeguards and the IAEA Additional Protocol. The IAEA must be fully equipped to carry out its crucial non-proliferation efforts. Norway shares the view expressed by the EU in relation to the proliferation challenges posed by Iran, Syria and DPRK. We urge these three countries to fully cooperate with the international community to allay our legitimate concerns.

Norway participated in the successful Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul this March, confirming our commitment to nuclear security, and we look forward to continuing this important process. We must secure all nuclear material and in particular reduce the use of highly enriched uranium. These are doable tasks, which will enhance security for us all.

We also need to ensure that our verification systems are robust enough to provide the necessary confidence in the integrity of both non-proliferation and disarmament processes, based on the principles of verifiability, irreversibility and transparency. We believe the IAEA has an important role to play in this respect.

Bilaterally, The United Kingdom and Norway have cooperated at expert level for a number of years on exploring technical and procedural challenges associated with a possible future nuclear disarmament verification regime. The purpose of this cooperation is to demonstrate that Nuclear Weapon State and Non-Nuclear Weapon State collaboration in nuclear disarmament verification is both possible and necessary.

Mr Chair,

The Chemical Weapons Convention has already created a very strong disarmament and non-proliferation norm. We must continue to work towards CWC universality. The Third Review Conference next year provides an excellent opportunity to further strengthen the convention. Syria's admission that it possesses a stockpile of chemical weapons has caused great concern and it shows that the threat of chemical weapons is still very real. Norway urges Syria to act responsibly in relation to these abhorrent weapons, not to use them under any circumstances, and to keep them secure.

Norway welcomes the positive outcome of the Seventh Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention last year. We look forward to an inter-sessional period during which we can address both existing and emerging challenges, and seek ways to further strengthen this instrument.

Mr Chair,

Norway fully subscribes to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, and we would like to see even more ambitious steps on nuclear disarmament. We believe it is time to look at how we can make use of the General Assembly in our efforts to achieve progress on this issue. Norway joins other Member States in calling for a resolution at this year's session of the First Committee that will enable us to advance our multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. We seek substantive progress on this issue, as an alternative to the current status quo. The UN Member States have an obligation to ensure that our multilateral institutions are equipped to deliver what is expected of them. This is the responsibility we should bring with us to the First Committee.

Thank you.