



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
Manatū Aorere

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United Nations General Assembly: First Committee 2025 – General Debate statement

**New Zealand Statement delivered by Ambassador for
Disarmament and Permanent Representative to the
Conference on Disarmament, H.E. Deborah Geels**

14 October 2025



Time Limit: 8 minutes

Congratulations, Chair, on your appointment. You have New Zealand's full support.

Let me begin by welcoming the announcement and implementation of a first phase of a Peace Plan between Israel and Hamas. New Zealand hopes that this provides a platform for a lasting solution where future generations of Israelis and Palestinians live in peace and security.

Despite this, Chair, New Zealand is deeply concerned by the deteriorating global security environment.

As we meet today numerous protracted conflicts are being waged, devastating communities, lives, and livelihoods around the world.

We are witnessing retreats from essential peace and security norms, and of rules that were painstakingly built over several decades after the end of the Second World War, when the United Nations was formed. In uncertain times such as these, New Zealand's conviction is that we have to redouble our efforts to uphold those rules.

New Zealand urges all states to work constructively in response to these challenges. The ultimate purpose of multilateralism is our collective security, safety and prosperity. As New Zealand's Foreign Minister said: "since war and instability is everyone's calamity, diplomacy is the business of us all."

Chair,

Through the Pact for the Future, states have recommitted to achieving a world without nuclear weapons, and to strengthen the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture that will translate this ambition into reality.

All States that possess or rely on nuclear weapons for their security need to take tangible steps towards disarmament. Nuclear weapon states must fulfil their NPT Article VI obligation and related commitments.

Threats to use nuclear weapons are never acceptable, and collectively, we must resist their normalisation. Such threats, whether overt or implied, just underline the urgency of reducing the salience of nuclear weapons with a view to their total elimination.

Eliminating nuclear weapons is also the only guarantee against the catastrophic consequences of their use. Working towards total elimination demands practical actions to reduce nuclear weapon risk, and for disarmament negotiations to re-commence.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is one practical step some of the international community has already taken to stake out a clear position against nuclear

weapons. New Zealand urges all states to join the TPNW, as the clearest possible rejection of nuclear weapons.

Chair,

New Zealand remains deeply concerned by the serious and ongoing challenges facing the global non-proliferation regime.

We continue to regret the Islamic Republic of Iran's persistent failure to resolve outstanding safeguards issues and to comply with its legal obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We urge Iran to return to full compliance and to re-engage constructively with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We remain deeply concerned by the Democratic Republic of North Korea's (DPRK) continued advancement of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, which pose a clear and grave threat to regional and international peace and security. New Zealand will continue to support efforts toward achieving complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the DPRK, and peace and security on the Korean peninsula.

We reaffirm our strong support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and recognise it as an important part of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Its long-overdue entry into force is a key step in achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. We call on all States that have not yet done so - particularly the Annex 2 states - to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay and without conditions.

Chair,

New Zealand welcomes the steps taken by the Syrian interim authorities to re-engage with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We now have a window of opportunity to eliminate chemical weapons in Syria once and for all. We must seize it, to reduce the risk of chemical proliferation, and contribute to stability in the Middle East region.

However, we are alarmed by the mounting evidence of the Russian Federation's repeated and systematic use of riot control agents and other toxic chemicals as weapons in its ongoing illegal war of aggression against Ukraine in clear violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Russia has binding obligations under the Convention. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, is abhorrent and cannot be normalised. There can be no impunity.

Chair,

2025 has seen developments that pose challenges to the conventional weapons regimes. Three intersecting challenges risk undoing the progress we have made in recent decades,

progress which has saved countless lives around the world and prevented unnecessary civilian suffering.

First, the nature of many contemporary conflicts is seeing civilian casualties at the hands of indiscriminate weapons increase, including due to the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Second, the amount of funding available globally for responding to the harms caused by conventional weapons is under downward pressure.

And third, we are seeing withdrawals from treaties prohibiting certain weapons, such as cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines.

In the face of these challenges, New Zealand remains firmly committed to advancing global efforts to reduce the humanitarian, social, environmental, and economic harms caused by conventional weapons. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Arms Trade Treaty, and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons were adopted to reduce human suffering and protect civilians both in peace-time and during conflict.

New Zealand calls on all states to uphold and strengthen the protection of civilians, and to take meaningful steps to reduce the burden of armed conflict on communities.

Chair,

We commend multilateral efforts to better understand the risks and benefits of emerging technologies, and to respond appropriately. New Zealand continues to call for urgent action on autonomous weapon systems and congratulates Austria for convening a cross-regional group of countries in the General Assembly to drive further progress. We also commend the Netherlands and the Republic of Korea for their leadership of international discussions on artificial intelligence in the military domain.

Space-based systems deliver a wide range of services that underpin our daily lives and are integral to global security. Their peaceful, safe, secure, and sustainable use depends on a strong and effective rules-based international system.

As a space-faring nation, New Zealand remains committed to promoting responsible behaviour in outer space. We support efforts to develop norms, rules, and principles that address emerging threats, including through approaches that consider both behaviours and capabilities.

We remain concerned about actions that could compromise the long-term accessibility, safety, and peaceful use of space. We urge all states to commit to preventing the weaponisation of space and to uphold their international obligations, including under Article IV of the Outer Space Treaty. Preserving space as a domain free from conflict is essential

for global peace and security, and to ensuring its sustainable use for present and future generations.

Chair,

Digital technologies underpin nearly every aspect of our lives and have provided our society and economy with unprecedented opportunities for connection and growth.

But to realise these opportunities we need to counter cyber threats that undermine international security. This includes the deployment of ransomware, targeting of critical infrastructure, and malicious cyber activity that is now increasingly occurring in the context of armed conflict.

New Zealand is committed to the normative framework of responsible state behaviour online. We have also recently updated our national statement emphasising that international law, including international humanitarian law, applies in cyberspace. Respect for these rules and norms is fundamental to maintaining a free, open, peaceful and secure cyberspace.

We look forward to the new UN "Global Mechanism" supporting all States to build a common understanding of these rules and norms, and advancing responsible state behaviour in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Chair,

New Zealand reaffirms our commitment to working with partners , uphold and strengthen international humanitarian law, and ensure that disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation efforts contribute to sustainable peace and security.

Thank you.