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Statement by H.E. Ms. Irene Zubaida Khan, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations at the **General debate** of the **First Committee of the 81st UNGA** on 09 October 2026 at CR-4

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to extend our warm congratulations to you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. You may count on the fullest cooperation from my delegation.

Mr. Chair,

Eighty-one years ago, the world witnessed a nuclear catastrophe which still haunts the whole mankind. We are aware that its aftermaths led to the formation of this universal body-United Nations to seek peace. Yet, eight decades later, we find ourselves speaking of nuclear escalation and expansion of nuclear arsenals.

Technology has made us reach an unimaginable height. Weapons have become faster, more precise and increasingly autonomous. In the name of national security, military expenditure continues to grow every year. All these are coming at the cost of erosion of peace related initiatives.

This brings us to a fundamental question: are we building a world that is more secure, or simply a world that is more heavily armed?

Mr. Chair,

For Bangladesh, the answer lies in diplomacy, multilateralism and renewed commitment to disarmament.

Bangladesh believes that the only absolute guarantee against the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons is their total, irreversible and verifiable elimination**.**

We remain firmly committed to the NPT, TPNW and CTBT**.** We continue to regard the NPT as a cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Bangladesh underscores the importance of ensuring access to nuclear technology, equipment, materials, expertise and technical cooperation for developing countries.

We look forward to the First Review Conference of the TPNW later this year. The Treaty has brought renewed urgency to the humanitarian imperative of nuclear disarmament. Likewise, the CTBT must finally enter into force**.**

Pending complete nuclear disarmament, Bangladesh reiterates its call for a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on Negative Security Assurances**.**

Nuclear-weapon-free zones demonstrate that security can also be built through confidence and regional cooperation. We remain committed to the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, and support efforts towards nuclear-weapon-free arrangements in other regions, including South Asia**.**

The map of nuclear-weapon-free zones should expand, not the map of nuclear arsenals.

Mr. Chair,

The experience of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) in 2026 also deserves reflection. Its substantive deliberations didn't continue through the usual formal process. Unfortunately, lion's share of the deliberations continued in informal mode**.**

Bangladesh therefore believes that revitalizing the UN disarmament machinery does not necessarily require creating more processes. It requires us to make the processes we already have work**.**

But institutions and treaties alone cannot guarantee peace. We must also address the mistrust and intolerance from which conflicts often begin. This conviction lies behind Bangladesh's longstanding leadership on the **Culture of Peace,** through its flagship

resolution on the issue. At a time of growing polarization, its message is particularly relevant to the work of this Committee: **peace must be built before conflict begins**.

Mr. Chair,

Disarmament does not stop at nuclear weapons. The illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons continue to fuel conflict, organized crime and human sufferings. Bangladesh supports the balanced and effective implementation of the Programme of Action (PoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI). We also support stronger cooperation on through-life conventional ammunition management.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is gaining its position through the passage of time. Autonomous systems can now identify and track targets with much ease.

However, technology is not our enemy. The question is: who remains responsible when technology is used to wage war? We must ensure the use of technology to address the challenges that affect global peace and the well-being of the nations.

For Bangladesh, we believe that human beings must remain accountable for decisions involving human life.

We therefore support meaningful human control over weapons systems and continued multilateral work on lethal autonomous weapons systems, consistent with international humanitarian law. Military applications of AI must also be addressed through an inclusive, transparent and UN-led process.

Outer space and cyberspace must similarly remain domains of cooperation rather than confrontation. Bangladesh supports efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space and to strengthen responsible State behaviour in the use of ICTs.

Mr. Chair,

For Bangladesh, disarmament is not simply vocabulary. It is a commitment to world peace and to humanity.

The measure of our security should not be how much destructive power we can accumulate, but how much of it we can give up for peace**.**

I thank you, Mr. Chair.