BELGIUM

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First Committee

Statement for the General Debate

New York, October 2026

Mister Chair,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair of the First Committee. You have Belgium's full support.

Belgium aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by the European Union. I wish to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Mister Chair,

Eight decades ago, the founders of the United Nations emerged from a world devastated by war. Confronted with destruction on an unprecedented scale, they chose cooperation over confrontation, law over arbitrariness, and dialogue over the use of force. Their achievement was not merely the creation of an institution. It was the establishment of a framework through which nations could pursue security and prosperity through common rules and shared responsibilities.

Today, that legacy is being tested.

Across multiple regions, we witness armed conflict and instability: in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and elsewhere. The principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, principles that have underpinned international peace and security for generations, are being challenged at a moment when they are needed most.

Too often, contemporary conflicts are viewed solely through the prism of geopolitical rivalry. Yet the principles at stake are universal and indivisible. Their defence is therefore a responsibility shared by all Member States.

Neutrality is not an option when the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a State are openly violated. Nor can we remain indifferent when civilians and humanitarian actors are deliberately placed at risk and humanitarian assistance is obstructed.

It is equally important to confront disinformation and denial. Years of false narratives regarding Syria's chemical weapons programme have been refuted by the rigorous, independent and impartial work of the OPCW. The facts are beyond dispute: the Assad regime retained a clandestine chemical weapons capability and

used chemical weapons against its own population. Evidence gathered by the IAEA has likewise confirmed the existence of undeclared nuclear activities.

We should therefore reject misinformation and remain guided by facts established by competent international bodies. The same principle applies to Russia's repeated denials regarding its use of chemical agents in Ukraine.

Similarly, we should not accommodate persistent non-compliance with the obligations that underpin the multilateral system. Iran should heed the calls of the international community and resume full implementation of its safeguards obligations and cooperation with the IAEA.

The cases of Syria and Iran also offer a broader lesson. The Additional Protocol should become the verification standard of the international community. Effective verification is indispensable to confidence-building and to strengthening the global non-proliferation architecture.

That architecture can be further reinforced through practical and achievable measures. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should be universalized and brought into force. Negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty should commence without delay. Further progress on nuclear risk reduction should also remain a shared priority.

Mister Chair,

Countless lives and limbs have been saved through humanitarian disarmament, with the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions at its core. In the face of growing international tensions, we must not abandon these achievements. On the contrary, we should reaffirm the lessons learned from past conflicts. Weapons whose humanitarian consequences clearly outweigh any military utility have no place in responsible security policies and should remain prohibited.

Mister Chair,

Developments in artificial intelligence on the battlefield are advancing far more rapidly than our deliberations. The need for guardrails is immediate.

More than a decade of discussions within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons has generated a substantial body of common understanding and agreed language. Belgium believes the time has come to move from exploration to negotiation.

We therefore call on the Review Conference to provide the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems with a mandate to negotiate a legally binding instrument, potentially in the form of a Protocol VI to the CCW.

Such a step is not only the logical continuation of years of constructive work and the consensus achieved on the elements of an instrument. It is also necessary if the CCW is to remain relevant in addressing one of the defining security challenges of our time.

Mister Chair,

The work of this Committee is often conducted against a backdrop of conflict, division and uncertainty.

Yet history demonstrates that periods of instability do not diminish the importance of dialogue. They make it all the more necessary.

Belgium remains convinced that the overwhelming majority of Member States continue to believe in a world governed by law rather than force, by cooperation rather than coercion, and by shared responsibility rather than unilateral action.

Let us therefore approach our work with ambition, determination, and a renewed commitment to the principles that unite us.

I thank you.