UN DISARMAMENT COMMISSION
GENERAL DEBATE
STATEMENT BY LATVIA, ESTONIA AND LITHUANIA

Chairperson,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Baltic States - Estonia, Lithuania and my own country Latvia. We align ourselves with the statement to be delivered by the EU.

Chairperson,

Let me begin by congratulating you upon your appointment and assure you of full cooperation by our countries.

The international security environment continues to worsen. The core principles of international law are being blatantly violated. For over two years Russia has been waging its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine causing immense suffering to the people of Ukraine and fundamentally affecting the security landscape in Europe and globally. Conflicts have been flaring up in other regions as well, including in Africa and the Middle East.

These volatile circumstances demand the Disarmament Commission to uphold its longstanding role as an inclusive forum for discussion on international security matters. We need to address the root causes of continuous erosion of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control architecture. Key pillars of international stability and security must be upheld.
In this regard, we highlight the importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which remains indispensable in the efforts to ensure stability in the nuclear field. With the Second PrepCom meeting approaching, we highlight the importance of laying the groundwork for the 2026 NPT Review Conference in a consistent and responsible way. A forward-looking approach should be developed, preserving the balance of the three pillars of the Treaty. We cannot afford another failure to reach an outcome, as it happened in 2022 due to the confrontational stance of one state.

It is important for states to refrain from steps, which increase nuclear risks and undermine existing disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control architecture. We remain deeply concerned about Russia’s decision to deploy nuclear warheads on the territory of Belarus. The decision goes against commitments which Russia has undertaken under the Budapest Memorandum. We are also alarmed by Russia’s decision to de-ratify the CTBT and its suspension of the New START Treaty. These actions contradict our ongoing efforts to prevent further spread of weapons of mass destruction and to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict. In this context, we recall the 2022 “Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War”. We urge Russia to act in line with the letter and spirit of this statement and stop its irresponsible nuclear rhetoric.
Furthermore, our states call for renewed efforts in the area of non-proliferation. We condemn the DPRK’s pursuit of its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. There can be no other solution than the DPRK complying with its obligations and ceasing illegal actions. In this regard we condemn Russia’s veto blocking the extension of the mandate of Panel of Experts assisting the UN Security Council’s Sanctions Committee on DPRK. We are also concerned by Iran’s continued build-up of highly enriched uranium stockpiles, as reported by the IAEA, and urge Iran to fulfil its international obligations, including the NPT Safeguards agreement.

It is completely unacceptable that Russia, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has been violating Security Council resolutions through its military cooperation with the DPRK and Iran. These steps undermine the global non-proliferation regime and prolong Russia’s aggression against Ukraine with devastating consequences around the globe, including in the area of food security. Therefore, it should be in the collective interest of the international community to seek ways to counter these violations.

Chairperson,

While recognizing the centrality of the topic of nuclear non-proliferation risks, we support the proposal to bring the issue of emerging technologies as the second topic for discussion in the Disarmament Commission.
New technologies, including A.I., autonomy and quantum computing, are rapidly transforming both peacetime and conflict. As we embark on a new three-year work cycle, it is an appropriate moment to engage in an open-ended discussion on the implications of the technological developments for international security. This debate should aim at fostering adherence to international law, including international humanitarian law.

At the same time, addressing this topic in the Disarmament Commission should avoid duplication with existing efforts, including the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems. It is also our strong conviction that to facilitate substantial discussion on emerging technologies we should seek to have on board all relevant stakeholders, including industry, civil society and academia.

We are looking forward to continue deliberations on these important matters in the upcoming days and weeks.

I thank you.