



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

Statement by

Mr Erkki Tuomioja

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

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Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am truly delighted to be able to address the Conference on Disarmament today. Yesterday we celebrated the International Women's Day. It is a good reminder for us that we need to further strengthen the participation and inclusion of women in all disarmament and arms control work in the spirit of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

As I have understood, you have heard several of my colleagues last week. This year is a special one in disarmament. We will have the NPT Review Conference in May and the First Conference of States Parties of the Arms Trade Treaty in August to start with.

Mr President,

After years of hard work the Arms Trade Treaty finally entered into force in December last year. This is a significant achievement for the international community.

With this historic Treaty we take a major step forward in controlling the use of conventional arms and small arms and light weapons that kill hundreds of thousands of people – men, women and children – every year. The ATT can contribute to creating a more secure and stable environment for everyone, everywhere. In implementing the ATT we enhance principles of human rights and contribute to a more peaceful and just world.

The rapid entry-into-force of the ATT serves as a testament that the international community is ready and willing to regulate trade in arms and to reduce illicit trade in arms. While this is a great achievement our work is far from over.

It is only through effective implementation at the national level that the ATT will make a difference. The preparations for the First Conference of States Parties in Mexico are well under way. It is highly desirable that all decisions supporting the implementation of the Treaty will be duly taken at that particular meeting.

We must not forget that the success of the Treaty and its potential benefits also depend on the universal nature of the Treaty. So far 130 countries have signed and 63 countries have ratified the Treaty. I call on all States that have not yet done so to sign and accede to the Treaty as soon as possible.

Another key event this year is the NPT review conference. The NPT continues to be the cornerstone of the international arms control regime. All NPT members have commitments and shared responsibilities in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses. The Review Conference provides an opportunity to reflect how agreed actions and commitments have been fulfilled across three pillars.

We acknowledge the decline in nuclear arsenals since the end of Cold War; mostly through bilateral efforts by the two nuclear powers with the largest arsenals. We encourage the Russian Federation and the United States to seek further reductions in all categories of nuclear weapons, including in non-strategic nuclear arsenals, and place them under a legally binding verifiable international treaty system.

Recently the pace of nuclear disarmament has slowed down. At the same time the urgency of nuclear disarmament is increasing as has been highlighted by the three conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

The painful memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki from 70 years ago reminds us of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use. The humanitarian initiative reflects the genuine concerns of citizens all over the world that as long as nuclear weapons exist there is a real threat of a terrible catastrophe with immeasurable human and humanitarian costs. The humanitarian underpinning is a fundamental principle of the NPT. Therefore, we believe that the discussion on humanitarian impact will be a natural part of the NPT Review Conference and will contribute to the proceedings of the Review Conference.

I am convinced that security cannot be based on weapons of mass destruction. Finland is committed to a world free of nuclear weapons. Working towards a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is a responsibility of all nations.

For concrete nuclear disarmament we need substantive and constructive engagement of those states that possess nuclear weapons, as provided by Article VI of the Treaty. To achieve progress we need further transparency and confidence building among all states. Therefore I see value in my Dutch colleague's proposal, of a mandatory regular reporting requirement in the NPT Review cycle.

Nuclear weapon proliferation poses a serious threat to international peace. All states should respect their commitments under the NPT by adopting and implementing the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement together with the Additional Protocol. We continue our efforts to strengthen the IAEA safeguards system and to promote its universalization.

Mr President,

The Conference on the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and other Weapons of Mass-Destruction was planned to be held before the end of year 2012. This schedule turned out to be too ambitious, as it was not possible to convene the Conference with the participation of all states concerned. Nevertheless, participating states have continued preparations and have taken constructively part in the process through informal consultations.

The Finnish facilitator and the conveners, The Secretary General of the United Nations, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, have communicated to all states of the region their assessment that significant progress has been made, the remaining key issues can be resolved and the Conference can be convened once the regional states reach agreement on the arrangements of the Conference. The facilitator and the conveners encourage continuation of informal meetings as soon as possible with a view of making as much progress as possible before the NPT review conference. The Government of Finland is committed to hosting the Conference on a short notice once convened.

In times when our common security, cooperation and principles are being tested and challenged we should continue to strengthen the commitments and norms that are vital for the international security and mutual trust. We should focus on what unites us. In this regard, we will support every effort toward an action oriented consensus outcome of the NPT Review Conference.

Mr President,

The stalemate in the CD remains a serious concern. It is my sincere hope that this historically productive and valuable body would once again begin its work and start negotiating disarmament treaties. There is a real risk of the CD being sidelined and overtaken by developments. Those of us who value the CD should prove this forum can still produce. In fact, we believe, we would benefit from a modern negotiation forum that would bring us results, i.e. disarmament treaties. A negotiation forum that would be open and inclusive, respecting various views, while at the same time aiming for consensus building. Therefore it is important to review and update where possible the working methods of the CD. The expansion of the membership of the CD would equally enhance the legitimacy and inclusiveness of this body. In addition, recognizing the beneficial contribution of civil society and academia in today's world, we should enhance their participation in the proceedings of the CD. In this respect we welcome the idea of a CD - Civil Society Forum to be organized next week.

I am encouraged by the on-going work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. We are pleased to have been able to provide our expertise for the proceedings of the Group. We are hopeful that this work will lay the ground for future efforts on the FMCT and negotiations for this treaty will commence soon. We are looking forward to studying the forthcoming proposal of France for a FMCT draft Treaty.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) is one of the key instruments of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation. With the Eight Review Conference in 2016 in mind, we should continue exploring constructive ways to strengthen the existing mechanisms of the Convention. With 112 state parties, the BTWC has a wide global reach. However, in order to make the convention fully universal, we still have work to do.

Countering biological threats by enhanced biosecurity is a vital element of global non-proliferation agenda. Biological threats do not recognise national borders and therefore international cooperation is essential. As the Ebola outbreak has shown us, promoting global health security should be an international priority. Cooperation and preparedness is at the core of combating infectious diseases effectively through strengthened biological and health capabilities. Through initiatives such as the Global Health Security Agenda, Finland is looking for means to advance global health and biosecurity by concrete actions. Finland will chair the Global Health Security Agenda (GHS) Steering Group this year.

Finland attaches also great importance to combating nuclear terrorism and preventing the risk of nuclear or other radioactive material falling into the hands of terrorists. Finland has the pleasure to host the Plenary of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) in June. New partners are warmly welcome to join this initiative and participate in the Plenary in Helsinki.

Finland joined the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in 2012. We have since then practically destroyed our stocks of anti-personnel mines and our contribution to humanitarian mine action has increased to the level of 6 million euro annually. We are actively supporting mine action in countries like Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Somalia and South Sudan. With other parties of the Treaty, we are fully committed to the Maputo Review Conference decisions, with the aim of ending the suffering caused by these weapons.

Mr President,

I would like to highlight one of the most concrete international disarmament efforts during recent years. After the horrendous chemical attacks in Gouta, Damascus in August 2013, we witnessed how the OPCW and the international community strongly condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria and was determined to follow through with the dismantling of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

Finland, among others, provided its support and expertise in various phases of the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. For Finland, this was a matter of great importance as we have for years provided our strong support to the Chemical Weapons Convention and its full implementation.

Due to the uniqueness of the CW mission, we have supported and our experts have participated in UN lessons learned workshops as they provide valuable information for example on how we can further strengthen the Secretary-General's Mechanism for investigation of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons.

Our work is not finished until the Syrian chemical weapons programme is completely and irreversibly eliminated. It is essential that prompt destruction of the remaining production facilities is carried out and the discrepancies in the declarations are clarified. The use of toxic chemicals constitutes a breach of the CWC. Therefore, we have also voiced grave concerns over the findings of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission which has established the facts around allegations on the use of chlorine on the civilian population in Syria. Finland was one of the cosponsors of the recent UN Security Council resolution which condemned any use of any toxic chemicals and supported continuation of the Fact-Finding Mission.

April 22 2015, marks the centenary of the first large-scale use of chemical weapons at Ieper in Belgium during World War I. Events in Gouta 2013 showed us that we need to stay vigilant 100 years later.

Mr President,

The United Nations Disarmament Research Institute UNIDIR has been instrumental for the disarmament community in providing research and expertise in our specific fields. We have always found their contribution beneficial. This year will be crucial in finding a durable funding structure for UNIDIR. All of our help is needed in this effort. Finland for its part will continue supporting the UNIDIR.

To conclude I wish you and the Conference on Disarmament a productive year.

I thank you Mr President