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Conference on Disarmament High-level segment

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The contemporary disarmament and non-proliferation system continues to degrade.

Very soon two key parties will leave the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. It was precisely this instrument that laid the foundation for practical steps in the area of nuclear disarmament and made an invaluable contribution to reduce tensions in Europe and worldwide. The fate of other nuclear disarmament treaties is also hanging in the balance. For more than 20 years the Comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty could not enter into force. There are increasingly alarming intentions to deploy weapons systems in outer space. New threats and challenges require an adequate assessment and reaction.

All of this clearly points to a global security crisis. We have at our disposal a proper means to overcome it, which is to organize comprehensive and balanced multilateral negotiations to smooth over disagreements. And it is the Conference on Disarmament, owing to its mandate and scope that should play a key role in the process.

In the current conjuncture the Conference on Disarmament should be more vigorously involved in efforts to prevent the use of new advances in science and technology for destructive purposes.

Synthetic biology, cyber-threats, the use of artificial intelligence and autonomous weapon-systems, the risks of weapons of mass destruction and related material to be owned by non-state actors constitute a far from complete list of threats, to which dozens of experts used to point out in this hall.

The outcome of the last year Conference's Subsidiary body 5 chaired by Belarus clearly demonstrated that in the context of rapid scientific and technological progress the above issues become cross-cutting thereby affecting all aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Hence, we think that it is high time to stop dividing the Conference's agenda into "core" and other items.

The new threats considered under the agenda's items 5, 6 and 7 should be considered on equal terms with nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, negative guarantees of security and the prevention of arms race in outer space.

Preventive measures that the Conference can adopt in response to these threats would constitute an important contribution to non-proliferation and enhanced global security.

Belarus stands ready to propose to the Conference a number of practically-oriented steps aimed at preventing the malicious use of new advances in science and technology.

First, we suggest that the Conference on Disarmament formulates a request to the UN Secretary General to prepare a comprehensive report on technology-related risks and challenges for international security and non-proliferation. We believe that it would allow the Conference to gain a better understanding on potentially dangerous technologies and related risks. Moreover, the report would be compatible with the objectives and tasks set forth in Chapter III of the "The UN Secretary General's Agenda for Disarmament".

Second, we suggest that the Conference reviews advanced best national practices that accounts for technology-related risks and challenges for international security and non-proliferation, which many countries have already gained. There is enough information on many diverse national-level measures like, in particular, codes of conduct for scientists.

It is important to explore the extent to which they are effective, to systemize them, and to determine the possibility of making them universal. This process can result in the formulation of rules and principles of conduct for preventing the malicious use of new advances in science and technology. Ultimately this effort can produce negotiations on legally binding instruments.

Third, we propose to begin studying and systemizing national measures aimed at preventing non-state actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Developing harmonized principles or effective best practices appears to be falling totally under the Conference's mandate and would constitute its valuable contribution to United Nations non-proliferation and counter-terrorist activities alike.

Belarus is ready for constructive engagement in all of these areas with all Members of the Conference.

In September 2019, Belarus together with the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe will host in Minsk an International high-level conference on combatting terrorism through new and advanced technology. We are currently finalizing the agenda and logistic matters. We hope that the Minsk conference will make an important contribution to global anti-terrorist efforts. We plan to present the outcome at the Conference on Disarmament.