



**Statement by H.E. Dell Higgin
Ambassador For Disarmament &
Permanent Representative to the CD**

**UNGA 74 First Committee
General Debate Statement**

14 October 2019

Mr Chair,

The New Zealand Delegation extends its best wishes to you, Ambassador Llorenty, as you guide this year's First Committee in its annual stocktake of disarmament and international security developments.

Your task is not an easy one. You are presiding over our Committee at a time when, as Secretary-General Guterres observed to the Conference on Disarmament earlier this year, we see that "States are seeking security not in the proven collective value of diplomacy and dialogue, but in developing and accumulating new weapons."

In his farewell speech earlier this year, also to the CD, Director-General Møller drew the lessons from history in alerting us to the dangers that "whenever States seek security not in the collective value of diplomacy and dialogue but in the false protection of weapons, they are sleepwalking into disaster."

The current disarmament and global security scene is undoubtedly a difficult one. One of the few factors for optimism lies, in fact, in the Secretary-General's own actions - in his efforts to promote dialogue and more positive security outcomes via the launch last year of an '**Agenda for Disarmament**'. As he has said, this Agenda "was created to serve as a tool to support the work of Member States". Indeed, Mr Chair, the responsibility lies with all of us, *we Member States*, to halt the weapons race, to restore value to diplomacy and dialogue, and to recommit to disarmament and the vision of the UN Charter.

This is the direction the SG's Agenda certainly points us in. In response to the Agenda, New Zealand has selected three disarmament-related items as our primary focus for specific follow-up action.

First, we have undertaken to renew our efforts in support of **Action 6** which addresses the risk posed by the ongoing existence of nuclear weapons. Beyond our support for the negotiation and conclusion of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, much of New Zealand's recent work to reduce the risks of the use of nuclear weapons, has been centred on our membership of the De-alerting Group – including, currently, as Co-ordinator of that Group. Since its establishment in 2007, the De-alerting Group has worked to urge a lowered launch readiness for nuclear weapon systems – as a concrete step toward nuclear disarmament but also as a risk reduction measure. We agree with the Secretary-General's observation that de-alerting is one aspect of nuclear risk reduction on which we should be able to make progress. Our De-alerting Group will indeed be pushing for this at next year's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference.

Second, New Zealand will give strong support to the Agenda's **Action 14** which is focused on avoiding the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA). As a member for some years of the EWIPA Core Group, we welcome the Agenda's support for action to redress the immediate as well as long-term patterns of harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure from explosive weapons with wide-area effects. We are very grateful to the Government of Austria for its recent hosting of the 'Vienna Conference on Protecting Civilians in Urban Warfare' and welcome the agreement there to move forward on a Political Declaration – an instrument which will certainly assist in spotlighting attention on the need to comply fully with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We very much hope that our work in this area, and the conclusion of the Political Declaration next year in Dublin, will be able to make a measureable impact on this very real problem which is so apparent in contemporary conflicts.

New Zealand's third lead area relates to **Action 20** and its focus on the violence and insecurity which is generated in many parts of the globe by small arms. My country has been a strong supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) since

its adoption here at the UN General Assembly in 2013. Our giving formal support to this action item reflects a desire to continue building on New Zealand's commitment to the ATT (and to our ongoing outreach activities on it) as well as to other aspects of small arms issues. These have an important part to play in terms of the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including in my own region of the Pacific.

New Zealand looks forward, Mr Chair, to working with all those States which have volunteered to work on these, and indeed on other, action items under the Agenda for Disarmament. We share the SG's hope that the Agenda will be able to serve as a catalyst for new ideas and new ways of working together so that diplomacy and dialogue can be fostered and disarmament will be restored to the centre of the international community's common efforts for peace and security.

Thank you.