



**High level Open Debate of the Security Council  
“Preventing catastrophe: A global agenda for stopping the proliferation of  
weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors”**

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His Excellency, Mr Alfonso Dastis, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain, President of the Security Council

Distinguished Members of the Security Council

Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I would like to thank the Presidency of the Security Council, Spain, for organising this open debate and allowing me to brief the Council.

I congratulate the Security Council for its adoption of Resolution [2325] endorsing the Comprehensive Review of Security Council resolution 1540.

My deep appreciation should go to the Government of Spain and, in particular, Ambassador Oyarzun, for your tireless work in chairing the 1540 committee over the last two years. Under your stewardship, resolution 1540 has been enhanced as a bulwark against the possible proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors.

I also congratulate the Plurinational State of Bolivia for taking up the 1540 Committee chair, in anticipation. You have big shoes to fill, but I hope you will take the work of the 1540 Committee to a higher level.

The Deputy-Secretary General has given us a sharp reminder that the threats and risks of a non-state actor acquiring a weapon of mass destruction are not receding.

How to tackle these threats and risks is a decision for Member States to make. I would like to highlight three priorities.

First, biological weapons. The resolution you have just adopted recognises the growing threats and risks associated with biological weapons. The need to address these threats and risks is all the more important after the recent Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention fell short of expectations.

There is much more work to be done in implementing preventative measures for biological weapons. One near-term step – as reflected in the new resolution – could be to augment information sharing mechanisms between states, international organisations and regional organisations on biological threats and risks.

For our part, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs will continue to strengthen the Secretary-General's Mechanism (SGM), in line with the recommendations of the 2013 lessons learned exercise. The SGM is the only instrument at our disposal to investigate, if a biological incident occurs.

Second, disruptive technology. I welcome the Resolution's call for Member States to take into account the rapid advances in science and technology, and to control intangible transfers of technology and information. The international community cannot afford to lag behind the technological curve.

The 1540 Committee could build on the request made in the Resolution [2325] and hold an open meeting next year on technological and scientific issues. Such a meeting could address the following two issues: First, emerging technologies and scientific developments which could have potential weapons of mass destruction capabilities or can be adapted as means of delivery; and second, how to prevent their misuse while safeguarding peaceful applications.

The 1540 Committee can also utilise its interaction with industry through the so-called Wiesbaden Process to further elaborate how the private sector can self-regulate to prevent misuse of technology. This could include through the development of industry codes of conduct and ethical standards on dual-use technologies with proliferation risks for weapons of mass destruction.

The third priority is capability. Since the last Comprehensive Review, the Committee and its Group of Experts in partnership with the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, have substantially expanded their outreach. In the last five years one hundred and eighty-eight States have participated in these outreach activities. This is a significant achievement, but not enough given the growing threats and risks, as well as Member States' needs.

Unfortunately, our capacity to respond to requests for help from Member States is declining. Donors have been generous but the gap between the needs and the available resources is growing.

We commend Resolution [2325]'s call on all States for voluntary contributions to the UN Trust Fund for Global and Regional Disarmament Activities. We want to reiterate our readiness to better match donors with recipients. We intend to raise the quality of assistance alongside the quantity.

Last but not least, institutional issues. As recognised by the Council, the 1540 committee needs institutional support, that is fit for purpose in our fast-changing security environment.

We have to ensure that the resources at the disposal of the Committee, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the experts, both through regular budget and voluntary funding are being used in the most efficient and effective way possible. For that purpose, our Office will do our best to support the Chair and the members of the Committee in their assessment of how to make best use of the available resources, including streamlining support structures.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Today's debate is a welcome reaffirmation of the gravity with which the Security Council treats the threats and risks posed by weapons of mass destruction. We count on Council members to continue to safeguard international peace and security not only by enhancing preventative measures through Resolution 1540, but also by looking ahead at response challenges in the eventuality that prevention fails. The consequences of an attack would be disastrous and we must be prepared.

I would like to close by repeating the Secretary-General's repeated call and the Deputy Secretary-General's exhortation today: the ultimate guarantee against any use of a weapon of mass destruction is through their total and irreversible elimination.

I thank you so much.