



PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
333 EAST 38TH STREET 9TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10016
Tel: (212) 213-5583 Fax: (212) 692-2498
E-mail: pmun@southafrica-newyork.net

**STATEMENT
BY**

**THE DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
MR MAHLATSE MMINELE**

**AT
THE 2017 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION (UNDC)**

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Mr Chairperson,

Let me from the outset join other delegations in congratulating you on assuming your position as Chair of the substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. South Africa also wishes to express its sincere appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency of Vanuatu for his tireless work as Chairman of the 2016 Substantive session.

We further extend our congratulations to the Working Group Chairs on their election. My delegation is looking forward to working with you to make this session a success.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Indonesia and Uganda on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Africa Group, respectively.

Madam Chairperson,

In my national capacity, allow me to make few general remarks on the two agenda items before us, which my delegation is looking forward to discuss in detail during thematic debates.

1. South Africa remains committed to **multilateralism** as the best tool to deal with issues affecting international peace and security. In this regard, it is South Africa's considered view that the UN Disarmament Commission provides an **inclusive platform for deliberations on critical issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control**. The Disarmament Commission has in the past made valuable contributions to our work in the field of disarmament and

international security and we call on all delegations to show the necessary flexibility so as to allow this body to fulfill its responsibilities.

2. The fact that the Disarmament Commission has not made any progress since 1999 has become a growing concern. It is my delegation's hope that the discussions and deliberations during the next two weeks, will be based on genuine political will and good faith, and that we will be able to make progress.

Madam Chairperson,

3. On the issue of nuclear disarmament, my delegation joins the majority of member states that have expressed deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would befall humankind in case of nuclear detonation by design or accident. Only the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the legally-binding assurance that they will never be produced again will guarantee a world free from the threat posed by nuclear weapons. In that connection, my delegation welcomes, as a bold and positive step, the convening of the United Nations Conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination which began on 27 March 2017. My delegation is very pleased that the first session of the Conference was a huge success, and that it offered participating states an opportunity to exchange views on the main elements of the prohibition instrument as mandated by the General Assembly's resolution 71/258. While there was significant convergence among participating States on the

key elements of such an instrument, we recognize that much remains to be done to finalise our work during the June/July session. We look forward to working with the President of the Conference together with all member states to ensure that the Conference achieves a successful outcome.

4. My delegation wishes to reiterate that our support for a prohibition treaty is without prejudice to the realisation of existing nuclear disarmament commitments, particularly those agreed to in the NPT context. As we approach the next Review Cycle of the NPT, it is imperative to recognise that the vitality and relevance of the Treaty, as the foundation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, is dependent on the extent to which State Parties implement their obligations and commitments. It is not acceptable for State Parties to treat their obligations and commitments as an "a la carte menu" from which they can choose. We call upon all States Parties to the NPT to honour their obligations and to faithfully, and without precondition, implement all commitments agreed to in 1995, 2000 and 2010 without any further delay, including the 1995 resolution on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Madam Chairperson,

5. With regard to conventional weapons, South Africa, as a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine-Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, will play its part on the journey towards a world

free of both anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. We encourage those States that have not yet done so, particularly those possessing such weapons, to join these instruments without delay. We call on those States in a position to do so, to assist requesting States in their national implementation efforts and to provide assistance to the victims of these weapons.

Madam Chairperson

6. My delegation expresses deep concern about the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons that continues to contribute to the fuelling of conflicts, particularly in Africa. In this regard, South Africa will continue to advocate for the UN to invest more resources in the implementation of the UN's Programme of Action on combating the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. South Africa will also continue to call upon all Member States to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty, as the only international legally binding instrument that promote transparency and co-operation and sets clear norms and criteria that States should adhere to when considering arms transfers, thereby preventing the illicit trade in conventional weapons.

Madam Chairperson,

7. In conclusion, my delegation looks forward to elaborate more on the two agenda items under discussions during the thematic debates and stands ready to participate actively during discussions, and to work

with all delegations towards achieving a consensus outcome during this session.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson