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FIRST COMMITTEE

Statement during Thematic Discussion on Disarmament Machinery

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Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was one year ago to the day when I last spoke to this Committee. As you may recall, at that time the main focus of my presentation was on the financial and administrative challenges facing UNIDIR.

I am pleased to report that since then, the Institute has completed its transition to a more stable institutional and administrative footing, and this more resilient institutional foundation is allowing the Institute to operate more effectively. While the transition was not simple or easy, it was made possible by the strong support we received from Member States, the UN's senior management, and by the continued efforts of our dedicated staff. I would like to thank you for your part in this success.

At its June 2016 meeting, UNIDIR's Board of Trustees welcomed the measurable improvement on nearly all challenges faced by the Institute in 2015. At the same time, the Board emphasized the need to ensure the Institute's operational sustainability and independence, reiterating its previous recommendation that the UN regular budget subvention to the Institute be increased on a sustained basis to fund the institutional framework required for UNIDIR's project activities in conformity with United Nations rules and procedures. Operating a research institute within the UN entails high operating costs — simply to comply with the Organization's financial, human resources and other rules, regulations and requirements. And like other voluntarily funded entities within the UN system, the Institute continues to face an increasingly challenging environment in financing such costs, which constitute our Institutional Operations Budget (IOB). This is funding that is not limited to implementation, nor duration, of a specific project or activity. In essence, the IOB provides the framework that keeps the Institute in being and supports all of our activities.

Our funders' overwhelming preference is to offer earmarked project level support, and sometimes it is the only option available if they are to comply with their national rules and policies. We are extremely grateful for their generosity. At the same time, Member States must decide how, individually (through unearmarked contributions), or collectively (through a larger subvention) or ideally a combination thereof, to cover the costs of the institutional framework. Some of those costs, in particular ones related to the workload required to comply with the UN's financial and other rules and regulations, are a tough sell for the purpose of raising voluntary contributions towards them.

The Institute's activities are like apps that need an operating system—comprised of UNIDIR's institutional framework and institutional funding—to run. For UNIDIR to be able to continue delivering on its mandate to undertake independent research and analysis, build capacity on both traditional and emerging issues, and deliver innovative, practical tools to assist Member States with the real-world challenges of implementing their disarmament commitments, sustainable institutional funding is indispensable.

Now that we have, with your support, largely resolved the long-standing administrative challenges facing UNIDIR, addressing this gap between dedicated project funding and institutional funding remains the one outstanding challenge. I'm confident that in partnership with you, this too can be resolved.

Excellences,

As administrative challenges have been resolved, we have been able to rededicate ourselves to developing our substantive programme of work. This year, for the first time in several years, we have seen substantial growth in our research programme. New projects the Institute has commenced this year include, inter alia, research on "Understanding Nuclear Weapon Risks", "Increasing UAV Transparency, Oversight and Accountability", "Nuclear Weapons in Europe: Stepping Stones for Restrictions and Reductions", and "Verification: Nuclear Disarmament". In Emerging issues, we've recently completed an expert workshop series on cybersecurity. We are also providing substantive support to the current GGE on Information Security. Our 2016 space and cyber security workshops continued to draw large audiences from among Member States, the UN and other international organizations, civil society, the academia and the private sector. And UNIDIR's work on the weaponization of increasingly autonomous technologies has gained international prominence in the LAWS discussion and beyond.

In the conventional weapons domain, we continue our work focusing on three key interrelated areas: weapons and ammunition management in fragile and conflict-affected settings; prevention of diversion and proliferation of illicit arms; and supporting the review and implementation of global instruments and standards. This includes supporting the practical implementation of the ATT to address diversion, through harmonization of End-User Control systems. To give one example of the practical orientation of our work, UNIDIR, together with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in partnership with UN Mine Action Service and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), recently conducted capacity-building activities on Weapon and Ammunition Management in Kinshasa.

These are but a few examples of our dynamic current research programme—and for 2017 we have several new projects in development, including on IEDs, on fragile states, and on supporting the BWC.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At UNIDIR, our passion for disarmament, peace and security comes from the belief that security for all peoples is the bedrock for economic and social development, human rights and the rule of law. Effective global governance requires that a silo-based approach be replaced by one which recognizes the

interlinked nature of the challenges we face – challenges whose complexity shows the limits of each silo's individual capacities.

At UNIDIR, we break silos not only within our traditional areas of research – i.e. by not confining work to particular weapon-specific portfolios – but between disarmament, security and sustainable development. In this regard, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are of particular importance, and of direct relevance to UNIDIR in several respects. We are working together with other United Nations agencies and Member States to advance sustainable development goals for the benefit of all.

Supporting the needs of developing countries is a responsibility of UNIDIR under its Statute, and several of the SDGs relate thematically to our work. For example, Goal 11 concerns making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Goal 16, in promoting peaceful societies, represents broader acknowledgement that the work to curb armed violence – work of which disarmament-related research and activity are part – contributes to development. Paragraph 35 of the Summit Declaration notes that “[s]ustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development”.

We also recognize the importance of bringing gender into the disarmament discourse. In line with the broader policy of the UN, UNIDIR is committed to gender equality. As we know, conflict and insecurity affect women, men, boys and girls differently and this shapes the dynamics of every conflict. The interaction between gender and conflict has major implications for how we should think about conflict, security and opportunities for peace.

Our most recent report “Gender, Development and Nuclear Weapons”, which we produced together with the International Law and Policy Institute of Oslo, discussed the relationship between nuclear weapons and gender – how and why the two are connected, both to each other, and to shared global agendas such as sustainable development. I was very happy to see a very good turnout at last week's launch of the report, which was but one of this year's several First Committee side events organized by or featuring UNIDIR, its work and its expertise.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a voluntarily funded part of the UN system, we have to constantly prove to our funders that our work brings value for money. We are acutely aware that since the global financial crisis, there are greater demands for transparency and accountability in the public sector, and an expectation that more can be done with less. For us, this constitutes an “impact imperative”, a requirement to turn our ideas into impact, or “knowledge for action” as our motto goes. We believe that the ultimate test of any policy is whether it makes the difference it sets out to make.

UNIDIR is part of the United Nations disarmament machinery, having been established by the First Special Session of the UN General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament, and being mandated, inter alia, to assist ongoing negotiations on disarmament. Sadly, the multilateral disarmament machinery is not delivering, and one can claim that UNIDIR is one of the few parts of that search for cooperative solutions currently working as it should.

As a small extrabudgetary entity, UNIDIR's funding and operations model is not always easy to fit with the UN bureaucracy. At the same time, UNIDIR consistently punches far above its weight, and has the unique advantage of being cross-cutting with both the issues and the stakeholders it brings together. We also provide a productive and constructive outlet to the dissatisfaction with the stalled UN disarmament machinery, and help design and implement change.

To conclude, an institute like UNIDIR will always be only as good and as attractive to our current and potential funders as the quality of our most recent substantive work – our reputation. In other words, we are constantly held accountable and this is one of our strengths. With a highly competent and dedicated staff, we have been able to deliver, and our reputation remains solid. With your support, UNIDIR will continue to serve the Member States and the entire disarmament community in their efforts towards a safer and more secure world.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.