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Statement by Mr. Vladimir Yermakov, Head of Delegation of the Russian Federation to the First Committee of the 74th UNGA session, Director of the Department for Nonproliferation and Arms Control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, within the General Debate, New York, 11 October 2019

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Mr. Chairperson,

First of all I would like to congratulate you on your election to this high post, wish you every success in your work and assure you of full support of the Russian delegation in providing for substantive discussions under the presented agenda.

We all see that the current situation in the field of international security, arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation (ACDNP) is characterized by increased tensions and unpredictability, escalation of old and emergence of new threats and challenges, multiplication of military and political factors undermining global strategic security. That is why we now urgently need a positive and unifying agenda.

Russia has constructive proposals on every key aspect of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Unfortunately, our efforts are blocked by the United States with either active or passive support of its allies. We are all witnesses to progressing destructive actions by the U.S. Washington is deliberately dismantling the system of arms control agreements developed for decades, that it now believes to be unacceptably limiting in terms of its capabilities to project and use force.

Since last year the U.S. has embarked on the active phase of the deliberate and cynical destruction of the INF Treaty thus leaving this agreement no chance of salvation. All Russian proposals, which

would help to strengthen the viability of the Treaty were rejected out of hand, without careful consideration. Alas, once again with tacit consent of its allies. The U.S. doesn't even try to conceal the reasons for destroying the Treaty. Washington's intention, – as was the case with the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2002, – was to have free hands for building-up of its coercive capabilities in the regions where the U.S. is going to force its interests.

Only two weeks after INF treaty's demise, the United States proceeded with flight testing of the corresponding classes of missiles. Moreover, the Pentagon made clear its intention to deploy new missile systems in specific regions.

Having destroyed the INF Treaty, the United States brought the entire world to a dangerous edge. Once free from restrictions hindering deployment of ground-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, the U.S. is simultaneously developing low yield nuclear warheads reducing the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons, as well as taking other actions, which threaten strategic stability. This situation leads to an unpredictable and extremely dangerous arms race in terms of consequences for the whole humankind. No one can guarantee that tomorrow U.S. missiles would not pop up near the borders of many states all over the world like mushrooms after a spring rain.

In such conditions the task of strengthening strategic stability and global and regional security is beyond the Russia-U.S. relations and directly concerns every member of the international community. In this context, the approach of European countries is extremely puzzling and disappointing. Many of these states supported, against their own security interests, and in a totally irresponsible manner, the destruction of the Treaty for the sake of the U.S. ambitions for global dominance. By so doing, they only helped Washington to strengthen its capacity to coerce against those countries that the U.S. declared its geopolitical opponents or adversaries.

Unlike the U.S., Russia, as a responsible State, is not interested in new "missile crises". We have decided not to deploy ground-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles anywhere as long as there would be no American missiles of the same type. In this regard, we call upon U.S. allies in Europe and Asia-Pacific to impose the same moratorium on deployment of ground-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles. We would consider such reciprocal move to be not only logical but also rather relevant in given circumstances.

With the INF Treaty gone there remains only one Treaty in force in the sphere of nuclear and missile arms control which is the New START. We have reiterated our readiness to address seriously all the issues related to possible extension of the New START. However, from the U.S. side we hear only statements about the impracticability of the Treaty extension.

Mr. Chairperson,

Nuclear disarmament remains one of the "pain spots" of the broader international agenda. We are committed to the ultimate goal of building world free of nuclear weapons. We do make a significant practical contribution towards achieving this objective including by diminishing the role and place of nuclear weapons in our Military Doctrine.

Further progress in nuclear arms reduction on the bilateral Russia-U.S. basis has run its course, as also the crisis around the INF Treaty showed. It is essential to make the necessary effort to extend the New START and to use the time thereby saved to seriously consider the ways of rendering the nuclear disarmament process multilateral, as we have repeatedly mentioned. The principles of

consensus, equality and mutual consideration of interests of all countries should serve as a foundation for a future multilateral process. Nuclear disarmament should strengthen international security and stability and take into account all the factors affecting strategic stability.

These factors include, in particular, unrestricted deployment of the U.S. global Missile Defense, development of high-precision strategic offensive non-nuclear weapons, prospects for deployment of strike weapons in outer space, destruction of the international system of arms control treaties and agreements, attempts to weaken defence potential of other countries by using illegitimate methods of unilateral pressure bypassing the UN Security Council.

Further steps in this area are also impeded by the existence of non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe together with the destabilizing practice of the NATO so-called "nuclear sharing", when alliance non-nuclear member states participate in planning of nuclear weapons use and are involved in training of relevant skills – which is a direct violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We note in particular that today the United States is the only nuclear nation with forward-based non-strategic nuclear weapons beyond its territory.

Mr. Chairperson,

Next year will be marked by the anniversary NPT Review Conference. However, we are approaching it not being in the best shape. The contradictions between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States are getting deeper together with controversies within these very groups. The commonly accepted nuclear non proliferation norms and mechanisms are being revised. All this has been accompanied recently by the attempts to use the NPT review process as a platform for exerting political pressure on certain States and injecting topics into the NPT context that has nothing to do with the Treaty.

There is no progress in the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the establishment a zone free of nuclear and other weapon of mass destruction (WMDFZ) in the Middle East. The November WMDFZ Conference could put the process back on track. We are calling on all regional states and all the NPT depositaries to be closely engaged in it, thus reaffirming their commitment to strengthen the Treaty regime.

The adoption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to settle the situation around the Iranian nuclear program (JCPOA) has proven to be the greatest accomplishment in the area of nuclear non-proliferation in the recent decade. Regrettably, this very achievement of us all was exposed to a fatal risk by the decision of the United States to withdraw from the JCPOA. Moreover, Washington has not only violated the consensus UNSC Resolution 2231 which it had co-sponsored but it also has been hindering the implementation of this resolution by other States. Against this backdrop one can't fail to note fairly responsible and extremely restrained policy of Iran. Despite provocations and pressure Iran continues to implement its JCPOA obligations remaining the state which is the most extensively verified by the IAEA.

The revised U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, in fact, rules out the prospects for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to enter into force. Obviously, in such a situation, any official launching of the CTBT-related verification infrastructure, in particular, international monitoring system, is out of question.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Russian Federation fully supports the international regime banning chemical, biological and toxin weapons, consistently advocates its universalization and strengthening.

At present, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is going through hard times. This international body which was granted the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize and where decisions have always been adopted by consensus, now appears to be divided under the pressure by the Western countries. There are two reasons for that. The Western countries attempted to politicize the so-called Syrian "chemical dossier" beyond all limits. The Technical Secretariat in violation of the CWC assigned to the OPCW attributive functions to "identify those responsible" in using chemical agents. The trend is clear: the Western countries try to subordinate the OPCW work to their geopolitical goals, thus damaging irreparably the OPCW and the CWC together with the whole international system agreements in the sphere of WMD non-proliferation and disarmament.

We consider strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) regime as a paramount task for the international community. We are committed to resuming work on a legally binding protocol to the Convention with an efficient verification mechanism through establishing an open-ended working group. To bolster the BTWC institutional framework, we encourage BWC Parties to support the initiatives to use mobile medical units and establish a Scientific Advisory Committee within the Convention, and, to update confidence-building measures. We will be pursuing the adoption of a meaningful final document at the Meeting of the BTWC States Parties (Geneva, 3-6 December 2019).

We consider it unacceptable to create alternative BTWC verification mechanisms in contravention of the UNSC and the provisions of the Convention. We hereby mean the concept of "peer reviews" of dual-use microbiological facilities, as well as the initiative to create a certain "standing capacity" within the UN Secretariat to investigate alleged biological weapons incidents. Our fundamental position: any disarmament and arms control mechanisms should be discussed and adopted by states parties' consensus at specialized international fora, in this case, the BTWC.

Mr. Chairperson,

The activities of certain the Western States aimed at developing and placing weapons in outer space have a destructive impact on international security. For instance, the U.S. 2019 Missile Defense Review de facto articulated plans to place missile defense strike systems on orbit. France's Space Defense Strategy aims at building capacities to conduct "active defense" operations using space-based assets by 2030. A similar document is being elaborated within NATO. The implementation of these plans is fraught with an arms race in space and the emergence of a new arena of armed confrontation.

Russia stands for an outer space free of weapons of any kind. We propose and promote specific practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS). The only way to protect humanity is to conclude a legally binding agreement, with the participation of all space-faring States, prohibiting the placement of weapons in outer space and the use of force or threat of force against space objects.

A certain contribution was to be made by the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on PAROS established by UNGA Resolution 72/250. However, the Group completed its work without approval of the final report. Its adoption was suddenly blocked by an expert from the U.S. who had previously been constructively involved. The draft report prepared by the GGE contains many fundamental

provisions both for further work on PAROS and for strengthening international peace and security. We encourage to refer to these provisions to facilitate efforts aimed at keeping outer space free of weapons, as well as to use it by all States.

Now the Western countries are fearfully avoiding even mentioning the fact that the work of the GGE was blocked by the U.S. The U.S. were initially against the establishment of the GGE on PAROS.

We all see that negotiations on the legally binding agreement on PAROS are blocked by the U.S. In this situation we will promote initiatives that encourage the use and exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes and that set a reliable barrier to its weaponization. In this regard, our No-First-Placement initiative (NFP) still remains the only option. The number of full-fledged participants, as well as the number of countries supporting and co-sponsoring the UNGA resolution on NFP, is steadily increasing. We call on all States that have not yet done so to show good faith and make a respective political commitment. We submit draft resolutions on NFP, transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities (TCBMs) and further practical measures on PAROS for consideration by the First Committee. We expect that they will be supported and widely co-sponsored by the delegations.

Mr. Chairperson,

The U.S. continues policy aimed at dismantling the entire system of international legal instruments on the ACDNP. Simultaneously the Western countries are promoting the concept of a "rules-based" order, while freely adjusting these rules to their selfish needs. Under such circumstances, the need to consolidate the international community on a basis of a constructive and results oriented agenda to provide stability to existing ACDNP system is increasing.

The strengthening of existing arrangements and the elaboration of new consensus-based ACDNP treaty regimes on would help to fulfill this task. In this regard, we submit to the UNGA First Committee a draft resolution "Strengthening and developing the system of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agreements". Its adoption would be an important contribution to the creation of conditions for the success of a number of important events in 2020-2021 – the NPT, the BTWC, and the CCW review conferences, as well as the extension of the New START.

We believe that the UN and its multilateral disarmament machinery should play a pivotal role in strengthening the system of agreements on the ACDNP. Recently, we can not also see some negative trends that renders the UN disarmament triad ineffective. The results of the voting on the ACDNP-related resolutions in the UNGA lead us to an inevitable conclusion that it is increasingly difficult for States to reach consensus and that there is no common programme of action in this sphere. Even the issues that used to be considered as unifying suddenly become a matter of intense debate. The trend of drifting away from a meaningful dialogue, the determination to politicize discussions, as well as the attempts to transform the UN forum into a tool to exert pressure on "undesirable" States were most visible at the 2018 session of the UNGA First Committee.

Another destructive factor in the context of the First Committee and UNDC activities is the unlawful actions of the U.S. authorities that refused to grant visas to the leading experts of the Russian delegation. Washington blatantly violates its obligations under the 1947 UN Headquarters Agreement. The "visa war" unleashed by Washington has already wrecked this year's UNDC session, for the first time in its history. Thus, the U.S. has unequivocally demonstrated its priorities in the ACDNP field preferring to deny visa to the head of the Russian delegation rather instead of engaging

in a discussion on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities initiated by Washington.

We would like to avoid such a situation next year. To this end, we submit to the First Committee a draft resolution on "Improving the Effectiveness of the Work of the First Committee", as well as the amendments to the traditional resolution titled "Report of the Disarmament Commission" regarding the convening of the 2020 First Committee and UNDC sessions at the UN office in Vienna or Geneva. These decisions, if adopted, could normalize the work of the UN disarmament mechanism on a non-discriminatory basis and strengthen the UN authority. We would like to recall that we have already raised a similar issue with regard to the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

The gravity of the situation around the ACDNP calls for joint actions of all States aware of their responsibility to maintain international peace and security. For our part, we will continue to work towards improving the effectiveness and coherence of the First Committee, the UNDC and the Conference on Disarmament (CD). The attainment of this goal requires to resume dialogue on the most crucial substantive matters of the agenda and to depoliticize discussions.

In this context, we would like to once again recall the initiative we presented in March 2016 that is constructive and, as we hope, appeals to everyone and is aimed at overcoming the 20-year deadlock in the negotiating work of the Conference. There is an urgent need to start developing an international convention on the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism. This would help launch a negotiating process within the CD in accordance with the existing mandate.

I would like to reiterate once again that Russia has practical unifying proposals on all key issues on the First Committee agenda. We hope that they will be supported.

We call once again upon the UN Member States to cooperate constructively on the full range of issues pertaining to international peace and security and refrain from imposing their narrow self-interests on the entire international community.

Thank you.