



**Statement by Ambassador Patricia O'Brien  
Permanent Representative of Ireland  
to the Conference on Disarmament**

**2 February 2016**

Mr President,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of your role and to assure you of my Delegation's full cooperation and support in your important and challenging task.

Ireland would like to add some remarks in a national capacity to those to be delivered on our behalf by the European Union.

This is a pivotal time for disarmament. Looking back over the past year, there have been some significant successes for multilateral diplomacy, including the ground-breaking Climate Change Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. The example of these international agreements, together with the agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, clearly

demonstrate the capacity for persistent and creative diplomacy to deliver results, even in the most intractable circumstances.

Likewise, the early entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty and the successful First Conference of State's Parties held last year in Mexico provide other examples of a successful Disarmament Process. These were brought forward, together, by States and Civil Society and show what the International Community can achieve, when we work together in good faith and in pursuit of the good of humanity.

But 2016 is a new year. We all hope it will bring new impetus to the Conference on Disarmament. As do all delegations in this room, we deeply regret the fact that the CD has been unable to achieve consensus over a Programme of Work in the past two decades. We believe that too much time has been spent in this forum focussing on divisions, and that not enough emphasis has been placed on what brings us together. It is more than timely to do so now, in an era when the global disarmament regime, including the NPT, faces both challenges and opportunities.

There are many issues on which we are all likeminded. We are all seriously committed to the goal of nuclear disarmament, even if our view of the path to that goal is sometimes at variance.

We share the vision of a sustainable future recently endorsed by our leaders, as well as a commitment to the UN instruments seeking gender equality and equal agency for women. In this respect, Ireland firmly believes that due consideration ought to be given to the gendered impact of weapons, as well as the need for women to be empowered, in disarmament and non-proliferation fora and negotiations. Ireland in particular commends the efforts of the Netherlands within the CD in this regard.

We all share strong concerns in relation to the proliferation of WMD. The UN Secretary-General's message here in the Chamber last week very clearly highlighted the nightmare scenario of non-state actors gaining access to such weapons.

Ireland strongly supports the OPCW, including in its essential work in Syria. We also support the BTWC and are looking forward to a good review conference which will lead to strengthened implementation for the Treaty.

Mr President,

This body has, as many have rightly recognised, already achieved much. Though regrettably, the list of achievements has not been added to in almost two decades. There is no more time to lose. Innovative ideas, risk-taking and the political will to engage in meaningful discussions and, subsequently in negotiations, are needed. In light of the manifold challenges as well as opportunities that disarmament is faced with, the CD cannot afford to lose any more time. We call upon all member states to spare no effort to ensure that the CD re-asserts itself as a significant negotiating component of the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Ireland would wish to see progress on the long-stalled process leading to a Fissile Material Treaty and will support all efforts to obtain movement in this respect, including the timely US initiative for a Programme of Work on the basis of CD/1864 as amended to include stockpiles of fissile material in the negotiation mandate.

The negotiation and conclusion of an FMT would halt the quantitative development of nuclear weapons. It would however not necessarily halt a qualitative improvement in nuclear weapons. The stark evidence of the long-term effects of nuclear weapon testing make it all the more important that the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty enter into force as a matter of urgency. We therefore call upon the remaining States to ratify this Treaty at the earliest opportunity.

The nuclear test carried out recently by North Korea is a matter of serious concern for us all. Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr. Charlie Flanagan, T.D., has said that the test draws into sharp focus the urgent need for engagement on nuclear disarmament by all stakeholders and he has urged the North Korean authorities to cease all nuclear testing and to re-engage with the Six Party talks.

Mr President,

Ireland believes that the NPT has reached a critical point and that the international community as a whole must re-dedicate and recommit itself in words and in actions to effective multilateral and verifiable nuclear disarmament. This is not an aspiration, but an urgent imperative. Without prejudice to the CD's role as the single standing multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations, the new Open Ended Working Group provides us with the opportunity - and a clear mandate - to engage and to work towards this shared goal.

Those of you present in last week's Organizational Meeting heard the call for inclusive and broad participation. This is a chance to have focused and substantive discussions, in a flexible, inclusive and responsive format - something we are missing in other disarmament fora. This is also an opportunity for us to demonstrate real leadership, courage and imagination.

Mr President,

Ireland strongly values the contribution of civil society to the debate on disarmament. It is regrettable that the members of this Conference are not able to benefit fully from their expertise in a more systematic and dynamic way.

Finally, let me conclude by saying that it is Ireland's firm belief that the goal of disarmament is one that is generally shared by states. Because of this, I would like to reiterate my Government's strong belief that this Conference ought to expand its membership.

There are UN Member States that applied over three decades ago for membership of this august body - UN Member States that have played an important role in the field of disarmament - and we do believe that the time has come for this Conference to have the benefit of their experience and expertise, not merely as Observers, but as full and equal members. Ireland stands ready to support any initiative, aimed at furthering substantive consultations to this purpose, as well as any proposal which would amount to a real and substantive review of the CD's membership.

Thank you, Mr President.