



S L O V A K I A

**Statement by His Excellency
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**Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to
the United Nations in New York**

General Debate

First Committee of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of your Chairmanship. Slovakia wishes you all the success in your endeavors in steering this prominent body and let me assure you of my delegation's full support.

Slovakia associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. Nevertheless, I would like to stress the following points from national perspective. The full text of my intervention will be posted on the web.

Mr. Chairman, this year we are celebrating 75th anniversary of the United Nations. However, in the meantime we have been confronted with scenario most of us never have experienced before. The COVID-19 pandemic puts us all under enormous pressure and creates new security challenge for the whole world. It also poses another stress test for the multilateralism which alone lives through a very dramatic period of deterioration of security environment and erosion of the arms-control and disarmament architecture, including blunt violation of well-established international norms. In this uncertain period, we have no other option than to remain fully committed to effective multilateralism and rules-based international system, with the United Nations at its core.

Mr. Chairman,

The NPT celebrates this year the 50th anniversary of its entry into force. Slovakia unequivocally supports the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and an irreplaceable pillar of international peace and security. Throughout the five decades of its existence, this Treaty has made, and continues to make our world safer.

We all wish the forthcoming Review Conference to be a success. We hope, as soon as the conditions allow, the NPT Review Conference should commence at the earliest possible date. All State Parties must implement their obligations and commitments assumed under the Treaty or undertaken during its Review Conferences. All three NPT pillars are equally important. We also need to continue promoting universalization of the Treaty.

We attach great importance to the core mandate of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in particular in the implementation of safeguards and independent verification as well as in promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We reiterate our view that the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements together with the Additional Protocols constitute the current verification standard and we call for their universalization.

Peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including the sovereign right of each country to include nuclear power in its own energy mix, remains of importance for Slovakia. Slovakia is a staunch supporter of the benefits of nuclear technologies for the socio-economic development worldwide as well as its contribution to the attainment of the universal SDGs. The central role of the IAEA in facilitating peaceful nuclear cooperation is an important enabler in reaching the above targets.

Slovakia supports pragmatic and progressive approach to nuclear disarmament based on mutually reinforcing legal measures and practical instruments, which takes into account the prevailing security environment. In this regard, we support, among others, disarmament verification cooperation, nuclear risk reduction measures, greater transparency and dialogue on

nuclear doctrines and postures, as well as other initiatives such as the Creating Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND).

For Slovakia, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBTO) entry into force is a crucial step for advancing disarmament and non-proliferation by legally prohibiting all nuclear weapons test explosions and other nuclear explosions. We call on all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining Annex II States, to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay.

We stress the need to continue working on the completion of all elements of highly sophisticated CTBT verification regime. Slovakia has been continuously contributing to the enhancement of the CTBTO operational capabilities, in particular in the area of on-site inspection (OSI). Despite the constraints and delays caused by Covid-19, we look forward and reiterate our readiness to host two field CTBT Build-Up Exercises in July 2021 aimed to comprehensively test the work done so far in the OSI field.

Slovakia supports the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of FMCT in accordance with the document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. To progress forward we should utilize the work already done in the relevant foras, including in the High-Level Expert Preparatory Group.

We welcome the strategic stability dialogue between the Russian Federation and the United States in Vienna and Helsinki. We very much hope that the New Start Treaty will be extended after February 2021. We consider this treaty as one of key pillar of global stability and security. The engagement of China in future talks on a new arms control and disarmament framework would be welcomed.

Despite being challenged many times, the Joint Comprehensive Action Plan (JCPOA), as a successful example of multilateral diplomacy, has remained an important element of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Slovakia supports this nuclear deal and believes in the continued determination of the remaining parties to preserve it. We regret the withdrawal of the US from the JCPOA and its efforts for reimposition of previously lifted sanctions. We call on all parties to approach its implementation throughout the entire lifetime of the deal without pre-conditions and with full seriousness.

We commend the indispensable role IAEA plays in the monitoring and verification in Iran in light of the UN SC Resolution 2231 (2015). The full and unconditional fulfilment of the obligations encompassed in the deal by Iran represents an imperative, inevitable for the safeguarding of the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program. Therefore, together with the international community we repeatedly raise our voice to urge Iran to reverse its activities that are not in compliance with the JCPOA and to cooperate fully with the IAEA in executing its mandate.

DPRK continuously and clearly demonstrates its intention to continue in its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, which is in violation of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions. We urge the DPRK to sign and ratify the CTBT and to return to compliance with its obligations under the NPT and the IAEA safeguards. We call on the DPRK to return to the negotiation table in order to achieve complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of its nuclear and ballistic missile programs for the sake of sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Slovakia fully supports work of the OPCW. We regret questioning the organization's work and activities mainly regarding the presentation of the results of IIT in Syria. We strongly condemn any use of chemical weapons regardless of the circumstances. The impunity in this regard must not be tolerated. We condemn the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, who as confirmed by the OPCW was poisoned in Russia by a military chemical nerve agent of the "Novichok" group. We call upon Russian authorities to fully cooperate with OPCW to ensure an impartial investigation of this case.

The current experience with the COVID-19 pandemics highlighted biological risks and vulnerabilities. It could serve as the impetus to intensify work also within the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). Slovakia reaffirms its support for the BTWC. We believe rapid science and technological developments relevant to the BWC need to be addressed appropriately through the strengthened process within the Convention. We are also concerned by the continuation of financial problems of the Convention.

Slovakia is committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space and preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment. We believe, it would be beneficial for international community to focus its efforts in the area of space security on improving transparency and confidence, avoiding risks of miscalculation and unwanted escalation, and start discussions on what constitutes the responsible behavior in outer space, without excluding possibility of legally-binding instruments on this matter in the future.

We support a free, open, stable and secure cyberspace where human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are observed. We think it might be right time to overcome divergences and start working toward a long-term, open and future oriented format based on the results of Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) meetings. We see as very positive sign of growing support for a Programme of Action on advancing responsible State behavior in cyberspace, which could help us to return on path leading toward consensus on cyber issues within the First Committee. We believe that it could provide a suitable framework for building on the work of both processes and steering the discussion back to one forum.

Rapid technological development poses new challenges for international community, particularly in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). Slovakia supports the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on LAWS in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The agreed 11 Guiding Principles are a welcomed step forward. The in-depth productive expert discussions within the Group showed that further progress on this issue is possible and needed. To move forward towards aspects of the normative and operational framework on emerging technologies in the area of LAWS, we believe we need to further deepen the discussions and seek consensus on relevant elements of LAWS, including the human-machine interaction.

Slovakia firmly supports the Ottawa Convention, universal ban on anti-personnel mines and aspiration of achieving a mine-free world. It is necessary to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, also through the implementation of Oslo Action Plan. Slovakia is determined to remain engaged in international cooperation and assistance through related multilateral institutions and in areas, where we have means, experience and resources, such as mine-clearance, training, capacity building, destruction of stocks and other

explosive devices. In 2019, Slovakia financially supported the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) project in Iraq, which is dedicated to explosive hazard management, training and technical support and risk education activities.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) will celebrate its 10th anniversary at the Second Review Conference in Lausanne this year. Slovakia remains committed to meet its obligations under the Convention, including destroying its stockpiles of cluster munitions by its stipulated deadline, the 1st of January 2024. We call on all States that have not yet done so, to join the Convention. In 2019, Slovakia financially contributed to the CCM Sponsorship Programme, in order to promote the universalization of the Convention.

Slovakia underlines the importance of effective implementation and universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which is the only legally binding international instrument for regulating the global trade in conventional arms and aimed at preventing their illicit trade and diversion.

The Conference on Disarmament (CD), the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, is an indispensable tool of the disarmament machinery despite its two decades lasting deadlock. We welcome the enhanced cooperation and coordination of the CD Presidencies through informal „P6 + 2“ format, which could bring most needed positive dynamics into the work of the CD. We believe we could also improve our work in the CD through revisiting our past approaches to the organization of the CD work in the spirit of “Back to Basics” Dutch working paper.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, let me express the hope that this session of the 1st Committee even under this pandemic conditions will be successful in searching for solutions that will serve the needs of international community in the area of disarmament, international peace and security.

Thank you.