

Colleagues,

I'm here to speak today on the Maldives and its adherence to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The Maldives is indeed one of the 173 State Parties to this Convention. The Maldives has actually been quite progressive when it comes to entering into treaties to promote greater levels of international peace and security. In addition to the BWC, Maldives is also a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. We present recurrent reports as per the obligations of these conventions, and through our unwavering stance in favor of non-proliferation and disarmament and against stockpiling and arms, we play our role, however small it may be, in promoting a safer world.

The Maldives is not a producer of any type of armaments or weaponry, nor do we have the ambition to ever become such a producer. The Maldives does not have the assets to play any role, other than a moral one, in the strengthening and enforcement of a global non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We can only state our opinion and concerns in this arena, and voice our support for those who stand up for non-proliferation and disarmament.

We have always held the view that the presence of weapons of mass destruction within the global community represents as much of a threat to us as it does to other nations. Should one of these weapons be deployed, its effects would be felt throughout the world. We believe that as a community of nations, every one of us has a moral imperative to do their part to preserve and ensure global peace and security.

And though this is the subject we are discussing today, I would like to touch upon conventional weapons (as was discussed yesterday) as well. We must recognize that conventional weapons pose an equal threat to humanity. Access to small arms and light weapons in the wrong hands constitute a great threat in further destabilizing already fragile situations. It increases the risk of escalating smaller conflicts to civil wars to large-scale regional and international conflicts.

The Maldives is well aware of the fundamental importance of compliance with commitments made in the context of disarmament. On the international level, the Maldives annually submits its report to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. On a national level, our stringent domestic laws and means of control have ensured that the illicit trade in arms has not, to our knowledge, ever occurred, either within the local population or with other countries.

Unfortunately when it comes to the implementation of our many international obligations, we are indeed often falling behind. My country is one that is devoid of small arms (except that in the State's care), there is no violent strife, no weapons of mass destruction, and no manufacturing of any kind. We are woefully complacent as to the possibility that non-state actors may try to bring weapons into the country.

With regards to the BWC, the laws most relevant to the implementation of this convention are around prohibited items, especially Law number 4/75. This classifies biological and toxic items as prohibited under Maldivian law and does indeed fall short as to what is necessary to meet the convention's requirements.

As the Maldives begins to focus on the possibility of foreign fighters originating in the Maldives, the Government has begun to review and revise many of these laws that might relate to this issue, so that legal avenues of recourse are available to them to ensure the ability to address directly these potential combatants.

However, this is of course an issue that has much wider implications than the BWC. Today, after the terrorist attacks in France, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, and Mali, we - as an international community - must begin to take a firm stand and have a unified voice against the so-called Islamic State and other related terrorist groups. It is imperative that we explore ways to end the recruitment and financing of these organizations so that the flow of foreign terrorist fighters can be stopped.

Countering the financing of this group and the flow of weapons will aid in its ultimate destruction. And that does mean greater controls across all countries at the domestic level, but also greater abilities to prosecute those who have a proven intent to join armed combat abroad. This intent to procure weapons and material to create weapons must be addressed as well, if we are to effectively address this potential threat.

There are some issues that cross national boundaries and partisan lines. Ensuring the peace and security of all our citizens is one of the primary obligations I have towards my constituents and one of the foremost duties I have as a member of the international community of lawmakers. I look forward to working with like-minded colleagues to fulfill these responsibilities.

Thank you.