

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR TAONGA MUSHAYAVANHU, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ZIMBABWE, AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE, 79<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 07 - 16 OCTOBER 2024, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES**

Thank you, Madame Chair,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you and the members of your Bureau, on your election to the helm of this Committee's 79<sup>th</sup> Session. I assure you of Zimbabwe's full support.

Zimbabwe aligns itself with the statements delivered by the Non-Aligned Movement and by the African Group, and will deliver further remarks in its national capacity.

Madame Chair,

Current geopolitical tensions call for a renewed resolve to rid the world of nuclear weapons and to take concerted

action to eradicate and prevent the production of weapons of mass destruction.

Violations of Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, including the insertion of nuclear deterrence in military doctrines and extended deterrence such as the placement of nuclear weapons in the territories of Non-Nuclear Weapon States, should be strongly condemned.

The threats of or use of nuclear weapons of any type presents catastrophic consequences for the entire world and should never be accepted under any circumstances. Zimbabwe calls upon Nuclear Weapon States, as well as Nuclear Armed States, to refrain from provocative actions as this undermines international peace and security.

Zimbabwe further calls for renewed negotiations and clear action towards nuclear disarmament, in a verifiable, legally-binding, universal and permanent manner. We also call for irrevocable negative security assurances to all Non-Nuclear States.

It is imperative that we transform this nuclear science from a science of destruction and Armageddon to a science of progress, particularly for the developing world.

Madame Chair,

We were disappointed at the consecutive lack of consensus at the Ninth and Tenth Review Conferences of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and regret the lack of a consensus outcome at the two Preparatory Committee sessions held ahead of the Eleventh Review Conference in 2026. We call for flexibility and compromise at the Third Preparatory Committee session in 2025, to ensure a successful Eleventh Review Conference, with an outcome that will bring the world back from the brink of nuclear confrontation and renewed proliferation.

Zimbabwe lends its voice to calls for the convening of a Fourth Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-IV) by the General Assembly, to catalyse the disarmament

agenda and refocus attention on the serious issues at stake for humanity.

Distinguished Delegates,

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons remains a serious cause for concern and a major contributory factor to armed violence and conflict. We urge the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action, along with its International Tracing Instrument, to address the illicit flow of these weapons. Additionally, we advocate for capacity building for developing countries in areas such as marking and tracing, as well as the modernization of National Arms Registers. Furthermore, Zimbabwe reinforces the need for the international community to support the African Union's ***Silencing the Guns*** flagship project, at continental and national levels.

Madam Chair,

Rapid developments in the field of information and communication technologies, while holding prospects for

accelerated development, also pose the corollary threats of misuse, both by State and Non-State Actors. The work of the Open-Ended Working Group on International ICT Security is therefore of utmost importance. Still, a permanent mechanism is required to continue to promote the responsible behaviour of States in the ICT domain and to curb criminal activities. We welcome the establishment of the International ICT Points of Contact Directory, an important confidence-building measure with practical possibilities for incident response. The July 2024 *CrowdStrike* incident, which caused a global disruption of ICT systems was a wake-up call on the vulnerabilities of these systems. Worse would be the case in the event of deliberate acts by malicious actors. We call for a single-track, State-led permanent mechanism as a successor to the current OEWG on International ICT Security.

Madame Chair

Advancements in the field of Artificial Intelligence have also propelled the development of lethal autonomous weapon systems. The prospects of machines having the

power to make life or death decisions over humans is unacceptable. We call for continued emphasis on the need for human control and for all aspects of warfare to remain aligned with, and accountable to, International Humanitarian Law, as well as International Human Rights Law. In this regard, we call for early negotiations of an international legally binding treaty on autonomous weapons systems.

Zimbabwe reiterates that outer space should be open only for peaceful purposes for the common benefit of mankind. The placement of weapons, of any kind, in outer space represents a serious violation of this norm and a grave threat to mankind.

Distinguished delegates,

Zimbabwe urges the Conference on Disarmament to initiate negotiations on the various outstanding disarmament instruments that are crucial for advancing towards a world free from weapons of mass destruction. We commend the convening of the United Nations

Disarmament Commission and emphasize the importance of ongoing discussions regarding emerging threats. These deliberations should aim to enhance understanding of the current international security landscape and inform the General Assembly about contemporary challenges, fostering a more effective and coordinated response to disarmament and security issues globally.

Madame Chair,

Training and capacity building of officials and experts in the developing world in the field of disarmament plays an important role in ensuring the effective discharge of their functions as the cog wheels of disarmament at national, regional and international levels. Zimbabwe calls for the continued facilitation of training and capacity building programmes to enable meaningful participation of all delegations.

Chair

Allow me to conclude by assuring you of my Delegation's constructive engagement during this forthcoming session, and wish you and your Bureau success as you steer our important work forward.

I thank you.