



**Opening Statement to the United Nations Disarmament Commission
Informal 2026 Substantive Session**

**Adedeji Ebo
Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs**

As delivered



9 April 2026
New York, NY

Mister Vice-Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome the opportunity to address the United Nations Disarmament Commission on behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs in this informal general exchange of views.

Let me begin by congratulating the members of the bureau of this session on their election and you, Mr. Papa Samba Diack on presiding over this meeting.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the outgoing Chair, Mr. José Pereira Sosa, who guided the 2025 session with skill and dedication, and to the Chairs of the two Working Groups, Mr. Akaki Dvali and Ms. Julia Rodriguez, whose substantive stewardship contributed to the forward momentum of this Commission.

Distinguished delegates,

This Commission remains one of the few spaces where the full UN membership can engage in inclusive, in-depth deliberations on disarmament and international security – deliberations that have intrinsic value and, when seized, can produce concrete outcomes. As the First Special Session on Disarmament envisioned, the Commission’s purpose is clear: to consider and make recommendations on the pressing problems in the field of disarmament.

And there is no shortage of pressing problems to consider. The international security environment is under strain, and the disarmament and arms control architecture that has long stabilized international security faces serious erosion. The consequences of its erosion are, quite simply, existential.

On 5 February 2026, the New START Treaty expired. For the first time since the early 1970s, no legally binding limits remain on the strategic nuclear forces of

the United States and the Russian Federation – there are no mandatory inspections and no agreed caps on deployments. The expiration of New START without a successor arrangement raises important questions about the future of strategic arms control. The Secretary-General described this development as a ‘*grave moment*’ and has called on the parties to return to negotiations on a successor framework without delay.

At the same time, we are fast approaching the 2026 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. When States gather later this month, the success of the regime will depend in part on evidence of progress across all three pillars of the NPT. Nuclear-weapon States have a particular responsibility at this juncture to demonstrate, through concrete action, continued progress toward the implementation of their disarmament commitments.

Meanwhile, emerging technologies from ICTs and missiles to AI and quantum systems are reshaping conflict faster than governance frameworks can adapt. As noted in the Secretary-General’s report on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts (A/80/237), synergies between technologies remain insufficiently addressed, even as their implications for international peace and security grow more complex.

It is precisely in these difficult moments when our citizens look to the United Nations to deliver on the promise of multilateralism. Against this backdrop, I am compelled to express my profound disappointment over the inability of this Commission to adopt its agenda, to hold a formal session and to complete its current three-year cycle.

By failing to open a space for deliberations, we reinforce those claims that the United Nations is obsolete and unable to meet the challenges of the time.

The failure of the Commission to complete its cycle, therefore, represents a tangible loss.

The United Nations’ disarmament machinery – including this Commission – has been able to have substantive discussions and able to reach agreements on

important outcomes even at times of profound international turmoil and disagreement. I hope it will play that role again.

The substantive items inscribed on the provisional agenda for this session remain relevant, and I shall address them in turn:

Distinguished delegates,

Let us start with item 4: *‘recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons’*.

The geopolitical context I have described makes progress on this topic more important, and admittedly, more difficult. But difficulty must not deter progress.

Member States can reinforce essential principles: that dialogue, transparency and legally binding measures remain central to strategic stability; that the global norm against nuclear testing - upheld for nearly three decades - must be preserved; and that the 30th anniversary of the CTBT’s opening for signature should renew momentum toward its entry into force.

Member States may also wish to reflect on the increased role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and policies – a worrying trend. The risk of nuclear use and of miscalculation rises when the salience of nuclear weapons in strategic thinking increases.

Nuclear-weapon States are encouraged to reaffirm that the use of nuclear weapons, or the threat of such use, is inadmissible and to give practical expression to that commitment by reducing the role of nuclear weapons in their security postures.

Within this broader framework, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons reflects the deep aspirations of many States for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and forms part of the international discourse on nuclear disarmament. Complementary pathways toward a world free of nuclear weapons are not a sign of weakness in the regime, they are a sign of its breadth and depth.

Distinguished delegates,

Turning to item 5 on ‘*recommendations on common understandings related to emerging technologies in the context of international security*’.

One needs to look no further than the day’s headlines to see the impact that emerging technologies are already shaping conflicts and inflicting harm on civilians.

Artificial intelligence (AI), uncrewed systems – including those employing some elements of autonomy – and advanced missile systems have continued to take root throughout the current UNDC cycle. Many others are not far behind and will shape our efforts to maintain international peace and security in ways that we cannot fully predict.

At the same time, many of the same technologies have the potential to greatly benefit humanity when employed for peaceful purposes.

On the whole, United Nations discussions on emerging technologies – particularly on their implications for international peace and security – have lagged behind the scientific and technological advances.

Some domains, such as ICT security and outer space, have seen robust engagement - last week’s organizational session of the Global Mechanism on Information and Communication Technologies security as well as the discussions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the open-ended working group are prime examples.

Other technologies, however, still lack a dedicated home within the UN’s disarmament and international security architecture. In addition, as the Secretary-General observed in his report on science and technology (A/80/237), “synergies and convergences between technologies have not received the same level of attention.”

The General Assembly, in its resolution on this session, has asked the Commission to dedicate three days of the substantive session to exploring adjustments to its working methods.

This is a welcome development. Openness to such adjustments is a sign of the Commission’s adaptability.

If I were to offer just one concluding remark, it would be this: *the Disarmament Commission matters a great deal.*

The deliberative function of this Commission has never been more vital, even and perhaps especially, when consensus is hard-won.

The space to build shared understanding and to develop common language can later enable progress elsewhere in the disarmament machinery. These are not abstract benefits. They are the real work of multilateral diplomacy.

Let us get back to this real work as soon as possible.

I thank you very much for your attention.
