

**Exchange with the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for
Disarmament Affairs at the 81st session of the First Committee of the General
Assembly**

**And Follow-up on Resolutions and Decisions Adopted at the Previous Session
of the Committee and Presentation of Reports of the Secretary General**

16 October 2026, 10am CR4

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to participate in this high-level exchange on behalf of the High Representative, who regrettably cannot be here today. She is airborne travelling as we speak.

I should start by acknowledging the very rich general debate that just concluded.

Delegations highlighted growing concerns over nuclear risks, rising military spending, and implications of emerging technologies.

But we also heard— loudly and clearly—commitment to multilateralism and strengthening the UN disarmament machinery.

For this exchange, I take the opportunity to build on the opening remarks of the High Representative.

Specifically, the High Representative called for the **pursuit of transparency and confidence-building measures, or TCBMs, to help close the trust deficit.**

I would like to further unpack this call to action.

First, a look back.

TCBMs have long been part of the disarmament agenda.

A UN comprehensive study from 1982 outlined the concept of CBMs, including their objectives, their characteristics and their opportunities.

Resolutions tabled in this Committee have advanced their application in areas such

as conventional arms and outer space, as well as in the regional and subregional context.

Key transparency instruments such as the UN Register of Conventional Arms and the UN Report on Military Expenditures were established.

The Disarmament Commission has also addressed TCBMs in both general and issue-specific contexts, including outer space activities and conventional arms.

Implementation of these measures has evolved in response to the international security environment.

In the Cold War era, TCBMs were developed to prevent large-scale direct confrontation between the two largest nuclear powers. Very practical actions were suggested and agreed to avert nuclear catastrophe.

From ballistic missile launch notifications to hotlines to troop movement notifications, very practical actions were agreed to avert nuclear catastrophe.

These measures were negotiated during periods of extreme instability, demonstrating TCBMs remain viable even under the most challenging circumstances.

Military transparency was advanced through information exchanges, notifications, observation of military activities, and verification measures, with the OSCE Vienna Document serving as the principal framework in Europe.

We have also seen the inclusion of TCBMs in disarmament and arms control agreements.

Confidence-building measures were agreed 40 years ago in the framework of the Biological Weapons Convention.

States Parties agreed the modalities for the exchange of information and the type of information provided.

Over the years, these modalities have been reviewed, expanded and updated.

More recently, TCBMs have been applied to emerging domains such as outer space and ICTs.

A 2013 group of governmental experts developed TCBMs on outer space activities including measures on information-sharing, risk reduction, and consultation. In 2023, the Disarmament Commission recommended measures to promote their practical implementation.

In the ICT domain, States established a Global Points of Contact Directory to facilitate communication during significant ICT incidents.

Other CBMs tailored to the ICT domain have been consensually agreed.

History has shown the value of CBMs but there is still room to strengthen them. But in doing so, we must recognize the role of political will in ensuring their effectiveness.

Their impact depends not only on sound technical design, but also on sustained political commitment by states to build confidence and to enhance security.

So, now, a look forward.

First, we must reinvigorate existing TCBMs and adapt them to today's security environment.

Their effectiveness ultimately depends on political will and continued relevance.

Advances in precision, speed, range, and autonomy have transformed military competition, complicating traditional confidence-building measures.

Therefore, we must ask ourselves how existing measures might be updated and complemented by new efforts.

In the nuclear sphere, experience shows that while TCBMs cannot replace disarmament obligations, they can meaningfully reduce risks by clarifying intentions, preventing miscalculation, and helping to avoid arms racing.

But to remain effective, today's TCBMs must be flexible, must be inclusive, and incremental.

Properly designed and implemented, they can help to build the trust needed to advance the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Work also continues in relation to biological weapons.

States Parties to the BWC have developed recommendations on confidence-building and transparency.

I hope they will be adopted at the final session of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention in December.

In the area of conventional arms and military matters, there is a strong foundation for further work.

But what is needed is a renewed commitment.

Commitment to the UN transparency instruments remains vital, particularly as global military spending rises to unprecedented levels.

An increase in reporting to the UN Register and the Report on Military Expenditure is encouraging.

But we also need a commitment to pursue other practical measures with a proven track record.

The UN Repository of Military Confidence-Building Measures is a useful resource in this regard.

And such measures may benefit from a regional or subregional approach.

Regional and subregional context, expertise and experience are critical given there is ultimately no universal template for confidence-building.

Second, we should consider the possibility of additional TCBMs to close the trust deficit.

An array of options could be explored—from codes of conduct to political commitments to technical measures.

Advances in AI offer opportunities to expand TCBMs to address new sources of unpredictability and instability.

Measures such as AI incident reporting and crisis communication mechanisms could be explored at the bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels.

Given the private sector's central role in AI development, industry engagement will be essential.

Of course, there are challenges.

AI-enabled tools are often dual-use and evolve rapidly, making it difficult for States to effectively monitor TCBM implementation.

But the value of building mutual understanding and trust surely outweighs the difficulties.

Against this backdrop, it is timely that the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters has dedicated its 2026-2027 programme of work to TCBMs.

By examining existing and emerging measures, the Board is identifying practical ways to rebuild confidence, and I look forward to its recommendations.

For its part, ODA has launched new initiatives to advance work in this area, including establishment of a task force and the convening of a symposium series bringing together experts to deepen analysis and explore new TCBM approaches.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Before concluding, I wish to very briefly address the traditional topic of **“Follow-up on Resolutions and Decisions Adopted at the Previous Session of the Committee and Presentation of Reports of the Secretary General.”**

As in past years, a detailed table of State views submitted in response to General Assembly requests will be posted on the ODA website as an annex to this statement.

I would underscore, however, that response rates remain low.

Aside from the transparency-related reports, most receive only 5–10 submissions.

I encourage States to consider both the value of these reports and how their mandates might be refined to enhance their usefulness.

Thank you for your attention.