Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like, on behalf of the United Nations Department of Disarmament Affairs (DDA), to extend a cordial welcome to all of you and in particular to the expert panelists of this symposium.

Well before 11 September terrorism had been a scourge in many countries in many regions of the world killing people, destroying economies, creating refugees and eroding national stability.

In the disarmament community, and in symposia like this, we have for many years talked largely about non-state actors and others, asymmetric warfare and the dangers of terrorism with weapons of mass destruction. The talking ended abruptly on 11 September when in the USA knives, box-cutters and hijacked fuel-laden commercial planes were used by suicidal fanatics to cause incalculable carnage and destruction with long-term political, economic, social and psychological repercussions. Academic speculation and suspected scenarios turned into grim reality imposing on all of us the responsibility not only to ensure that there is never again, anywhere in this world, a repetition of such an abomination but that we also strengthen our global institutions to co-operate as a human family against such common threats as terrorism. I
am therefore particularly glad to have representatives of the IAEA and OPCW present with us today together with academic and diplomatic experts to discuss what concrete action we can take to fulfill our responsibilities.

The United Nations has reacted with remarkable speed and solidarity. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/56/1 and Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1368(2001) and S/RES/1373 (2001) are concrete evidence of this. In his statement to the General Assembly of 1 October, Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged us to "build on that wave of human solidarity - to ensure that the momentum is not lost, to develop a broad, comprehensive and above all sustained strategy to combat terrorism and eradicate it from our world". The initiative taken by DDA to organize this symposium, six weeks after the catastrophic event of 11 September, is aimed precisely at achieving this task. We need a common strategy in the disarmament area to deal with this global challenge while pressing ahead with our agreed objectives of achieving a common security with the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and the reduction of conventional arms to the lowest possible level for legitimate national defence. The elements of this strategy must include a strengthened legal regime but, as Secretary-General Annan has said, the search for legal precision must be driven by the need for moral clarity. Heightened vigilance and a prioritization of disarmament goals are among other elements.

Weapon-based security not only perpetuates the wrong value system internationally but it also increases weapon stocks and the danger of their diversion to non-state actors and individual warlords with calamitous consequences. The increasing number and sophistication of weaponry and expensive defence systems will not protect us from terrorism just as the derogation from fundamental human rights cannot be justified by the fight against terrorism. Disarmament and non-proliferation norms contribute to the battle against terrorism. Short-term expediency should not lead us to compromise on them because they will eventually feed terrorism as we have seen from the legacy of the Cold War.

The danger of terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction needs to be assessed realistically before we set about taking the necessary precautions. I have said elsewhere that "the objective facts require that we be neither alarmist sowers of panic, nor complacent do-nothings". There is no doubt that the consequences from the use of just one weapon of mass destruction by terrorists would be devastating. We need however to examine - whether and in what quantities materials are available; the technology needed to weaponize them, and finally, what delivery methods could be used. This analysis will help us to strengthen the legal norms that we have and to create new ones to block the loopholes. It will help us redouble the cooperation among member states, among international organizations and non-governmental organizations. The support and vigilance of civil society is vital. One of the aims of terrorism is to cause panic and while we must not let this happen, greater security and scrutiny are obviously necessary. Several obstacles remain to assure full implementation or strengthening of existing global norms against the use of weapons of mass destruction, in particular chemical and biological weapons.
The United Nations provides a forum for designing the strategy in the battle against terrorism. Elsewhere in this building delegates are making good progress in finalizing agreement on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. Others will examine the political, economic and social causes of terrorism. We in the disarmament community have also before the First Committee a proposal of the Chairman for a resolution on "Global efforts against terrorism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation". In this symposium we have a unique opportunity for an exchange of views, a clarification of the issues and for proposing new paths for co-operation in addressing existing and potential terrorist uses of weapons - both conventional and weapons of mass destruction. There will be a need for technical assistance in many instances. We will also need to examine and prevent new types of weapons or uses of implements and objects as weapons as well as new targets. What is clear is that old concepts of deterrence, and theories of conventional war are not applicable to the battle against terrorism. While various forms of fanaticism and anarchism have existed throughout history the capability today of indiscriminate violence calculated to produce chaos and endangering civilian populations is far greater, more destructive and highly dangerous. It is incumbent on the international community to strengthen the rule of international law in international relations and unite around the norms of civilized societies. We must make greater progress in achieving our disarmament and non-proliferation goals and thereby contribute to the creation of a safer and better world in which terrorism cannot breed and flourish.