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PRESS RELEASE

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UN High-Level Event:

“Preventing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction to Non-State Actors: The Implementation of Resolution 1540 (2004) in the Arab World”

26 April 2013, New York — The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations in collaboration with the United Nations University (UNU) on 24 April 2013 concluded a 3-day workshop focused on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to non-state actors with particular reference to the Arab world.

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1540 under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter and established the 1540 Committee as one of its subsidiary bodies in April 2004. Under the Resolution, states are obliged to refrain from supporting, by any means, non-state actors, including terrorists, from developing, acquiring, manufacturing, possessing, transporting, transferring or using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery.

The workshop brought together UN Member States from the Gulf Cooperation Council and from the League of Arab States, 1540 Committee experts, and leading academics and NGOs to discuss achievements and challenges faced in implementing the resolution.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon remarked in his statement on the first day of the event: “Resolution 1540 reflects our international resolve to prevent nuclear, chemical or biological attacks against civilians. Weapons of mass destruction remain among the gravest security threats facing the world community — including the risk that these destructive weapons may be acquired and used by non-state actors.”

The Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Abdallah Y. Al-Mouallimi, remarked: “The Kingdom’s objective is to help improve international cooperation and full participation by all relevant parties. With this in mind, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reaffirms its support of Resolution 1540 and subsequent resolutions, particularly Security Council Resolution 1977 (2011). The implementation of these resolutions can only be achieved by synergetic, concerted and coordinated international efforts, and by developing strong mechanisms and a common database to reinforce this trend.”

Dr. David M. Malone, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Rector of UNU, noted that “the efforts of Saudi Arabia, the staff of the 1540 Committee and UNU are part of a long-standing practice of broader consultations and dialogue between Security Council members and staff on the one hand, and non-Council Member States and experts on the other. Such consultations have generated a variety of options for improving the efficacy of the work of the Security Council”. Rector Malone noted that collaboration on implementation of Resolution 1540 falls within the realm of UNU’s mandate as a think tank for the United Nations system.

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Dr. W. Pal Singh Sidhu, Senior Fellow, Center for International Cooperation, New York University, speaking for UNU, stressed the importance of non-treaty initiatives such as Resolution 1540, saying: “Given the growing role that non-state actors and individuals are expected to play in future WMD proliferation, we are likely to see an increase in non-treaty initiatives like 1540. However, we need to ensure that such initiatives remain exceptions and do not undermine the norm-setting, treaty-based regimes established to prevent proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.”

The workshop sought to define more precisely the term “non-state actors” and to identify the complexities of implementing such a resolution — in particular, at the regional and inter-regional levels. In the final session of the workshop, students joined delegates from UN Member States, researchers and NGO representatives with a view to sharing an insight into an important aspect of the functioning of the Security Council.

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