

Opening Statement by Mr. Dhanapala at the Symposium on

Missile Development and the Impact on Global Security

I would like to start by welcoming all of you to the symposium on "Missile Development and the Impact on Global Security." I would also like to welcome and express my sincere appreciation to our five panelists, Ambassador Istvan Gyarmati, Chief Advisor to the Foreign Minister on Security Policy Issues and the current Chairman of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR); Mr. Edmundo Fujita, Special Assistant to the Minister for Special Projects in charge of Space Affairs; Air Vice Marshal Kapil Kak, a Senior Fellow of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses; Mr. Aaron Karp, Senior Faculty Associate at Old Dominion University; and Mr. Wang Qun, Division Director at the Department of Arms Control and Disarmament of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, who have been kind enough to allocate some of their precious time for this event, in spite of their busy schedules.

Today's symposium is the second of a series of discussions which the Department of Disarmament Affairs has initiated since last October on topics of interest in the field of arms limitation and disarmament, with a view to broadening understanding and facilitating a meaningful discussion among Member States and the general public. Indeed, you may recall the first such event was held last October on the "De-Alerting of Nuclear Weapons," a topic in many ways related to what we propose to discuss this afternoon.

As you may have already noted, the title of today's symposium was kept broad enough so that the theme would not be narrowed down to just certain aspects of missile related issues, such as export controls or the problem of missile proliferation in specific regions. The objective of the symposium is to provide an overall picture of the rapidly evolving situation of missile development and proliferation, whether armed with conventional or WMD warheads, export controls, civilian space programmes and missile defence issues and their potential impact on global security. I would also hope that the panelists explore the prospects for a multilateral consensus on negotiating non-discriminatory restraints on missile development, beginning with confidence-building measures like data exchanges and, including the possible creation of missile-free zones.

The issue of ballistic missiles has become a growing concern of the international community in recent years. Ballistic missile technology is no more restricted to a limited number of States, as seen in the missile programmes of a rising number of States. Excluding the nuclear-weapon-States, there are reportedly more than a dozen States possessing various levels of capabilities for the development and production of ballistic missiles. There has indeed been increasingly easier access to technology, expertise and information for the development of such systems. Current targeting policies and the fact that large numbers of missiles are ready to be launched on warning, imperil the lives of millions of civilians in cities around the world. There is also the real danger of missiles being used as anti-satellite weapons, threatening to engulf outer space in war fighting strategies.

International concerns have been further heightened by a number of well documented cases of ballistic missile tests conducted over the past eight months in various parts of the globe, including Northeast Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. These developments, on the other hand, have intensified calls in

some countries for the need of adequate defenses against ballistic missiles, especially those capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. In the United States alone, the debate over the need for a national missile defense (NMD) system has been continuing for several years, with national missile defense supporters calling for the deployment of anti-missile defense systems going beyond those permitted by the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. As a consequence, concerns have also been raised by some States over the mounting danger of a new expensive arms race on both the regional and global levels and their negative impact on existing multilateral disarmament agreements.

There is currently no multilateral treaty or agreement regulating the production, possession or trade in missiles. The 29 member Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), established in 1987, is an informal and voluntary export control regime that seeks to limit the proliferation of missile systems and related technology (rocket systems, UAVs) that can deliver a payload of 500 kg or greater to a range of at least 300 km. Although the scope of the MTCR was extended in 1993 to include missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, it is not intended to impede national space programmes, as long as they do not contribute to the development of delivery systems for WMDs. The MTCR is certainly not a decision-making authority and each member is responsible for implementing group decisions through its national laws and regulations. Moreover, many important missile-producing countries still remain outside the MTCR. The MTCR also, like some other regimes, focuses on non-proliferation and not the disarmament of established missile-producing countries - for some of whom missiles are important tools of nuclear deterrence.

The issues I just described, could have negative implications for existing bilateral and multilateral disarmament and arms control efforts. Indeed, as stated by the Secretary-General last week, recent developments in the field of ballistic missiles and missile defenses have underscored the urgent need for multilaterally negotiated norms against the spread of ballistic missile technology for military purposes. International agreement on such norms would substantially improve prospects for future progress on existing bilateral and multilateral disarmament and arms control treaties.