

REMARKS BY UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL DHANAPALA BEFORE THE FIRST COMMITTEE, 11 October 1999

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman -- and the members of the bureau -- upon your election to guide the work of this Committee. Your long diplomatic experience, which includes service on the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, equips you well for the tasks ahead.

The Committee will be taking up some timely and very complex issues on the international security agenda. This challenge has been rendered all the more formidable by a number of developments over the last year that have jeopardized existing disarmament agreements, while at the same time, military expenditures are once again on the rise in many countries. These events -- which include a significant increase in 1998 in the frequency of intra-state wars -- only further underscore the vital role that the United Nations must play in upholding existing norms of international peace and security and in forging the necessary political will to establish new agreements. Together, we must refuse to accept that war, weapons of mass destruction, or the excessive accumulation or illicit transfer of arms are now just hallmarks of the natural human condition. We must reaffirm our collective commitments to the principles of the Charter, including the peaceful settlement of disputes and the duty to protect non-combatants in wartime environments. As the Secretary-General recently stated in his *Report on the Work of the Organization*, "there is no higher goal, no deeper commitment and no greater ambition than preventing armed conflict." Disarmament is central to that task and to the creation of a culture of prevention.

The opening of deliberations of this Committee is always an occasion that is greeted with great anticipation. Seen in its historical context, today's event has some special significance:

- Exactly 60 years ago, President Franklin Roosevelt received a letter from Albert Einstein stating that "extremely powerful bombs of a new type" could be manufactured from uranium. Yet while the race for the bomb may well have originated on this date, the demand for nuclear disarmament was not far behind. In 1946, the General Assembly's first resolution called for "*the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.*"
- Today, we are less than 2,000 hours from the next millennium. This in itself should inspire a renewed commitment by delegations to forge a new consensus on all outstanding issues.
- Tomorrow will mark the official date when the world population is expected to pass the 6-billion mark. The vision of the world community passing into a new century with both growing populations and growing inequities in opportunities and incomes, constitutes a

potential nightmare for international peace and security, all the more so in a thermonuclear age. This only further underscores that disarmament and development are mutually-reinforcing and vital to world peace and prosperity.

Perhaps the most consistently difficult issue on the Committee's agenda over the years has been the goal of accomplishing global nuclear disarmament, and the global trends in this area are once again mixed. Though nuclear weapons stockpiles have declined significantly since the days of the Cold War, tens of thousands of such weapons remain in existence -- many on high-alert status, many ready for first-use in future conflicts, and many available for tactical battlefield use. With respect to strategic nuclear weapons, the START II treaty has still not entered into force and -- while preliminary discussions have begun -- negotiations have not yet started on START III. Other important treaties have not yet entered into force, including the Pelindaba Treaty to create an African nuclear-weapon-free zone and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which will prohibit all nuclear weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions.

Last Friday in Vienna -- just two days before the 36th anniversary of the entry into force of the Partial Test Ban Treaty -- participants attending the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT issued a declaration renewing their determination to work for universal ratification of this treaty and its early entry into force. While the shocks from last year's nuclear tests in South Asia continue to reverberate throughout the global non-proliferation regime, hopes remain that India and Pakistan will soon join the treaty.

With respect to controls over nuclear material, forty-five countries have agreed to adhere to the Additional Protocol developed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to strengthen nuclear safeguards. The world community must build on this achievement toward the goal of acceptance of these responsible controls by all countries with civilian nuclear programmes. As the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) prepare for next year's Review Conference, more progress is also needed in encouraging the 52 NPT States without safeguards agreements in force to conclude such agreements and to bring them into force without further delay. In the Conference on Disarmament (CD), efforts to conclude a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices have not yet reached a consensus. And because of the dangers associated with the acquisition of such material by non-state groups, efforts have been underway in the United Nations to negotiate a Convention on the Suppression of Nuclear Terrorism, which -- when concluded -- would contribute to the global culture of prevention.

Positive efforts are also underway to improve controls specifically over nuclear-weapon materials. For example, the Trilateral Initiative -- a collaborative effort involving the Russian Federation, the United States, and the IAEA to verify excess weapon-origin fissile materials -- has so far resulted in the placement of several metric tons of such materials under safeguards. The preliminary success of this initiative should encourage these countries to expand the amounts of material covered by these controls, and inspire other nuclear-weapon states to follow this precedent as a positive step forward in implementing their own disarmament commitments.

The need for greater progress on global nuclear disarmament was specifically addressed last May by many representatives attending the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference, a session that concluded without an agreement on any substantive recommendations. On 23 September this year, the ministers of foreign affairs of the five permanent members of the Security Council issued a joint statement reaffirming their commitments to nuclear disarmament as well as to general and complete disarmament under Article VI of the NPT. They also reaffirmed their commitment to the decisions of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. Prospects for the success of next year's NPT Review Conference will depend to a considerable extent upon whether these countries can agree beforehand on concrete measures to implement such commitments.

With respect to other weapons of mass destruction, the record is also mixed. Memberships in the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) are growing, yet still falling well short of universality. The States Parties to both treaties are nevertheless continuing to recruit new members, while efforts are underway in Geneva in the Ad Hoc Group to strengthen the BWC through the elaboration of verification and confidence-building measures.

With respect to missiles, the Secretary-General noted in this year's *Report on the Work of the Organization* (A/54/1) that the development and testing of longer-range missiles -- together with the development of missile defences and the fact that large numbers of missiles are available for launch on warning -- seriously threaten peace and security. If the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty -- which leaders from the United States and the Russian Federation have called a "cornerstone of strategic stability" -- crumbles under the weight of new pressures to deploy national missile defence systems, the world community may soon lose another cornerstone as well: its long-sought goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. The Secretary-General has recently reiterated that "multilaterally negotiated norms" are needed in all these missile areas.

In light of the rising incidence of conflicts involving conventional arms, perhaps the most welcome development over the last year with respect to controls over such arms has been a significant increase in international awareness and concern over the tragic human toll from the excessive accumulation and illicit trafficking in such weapons, especially small arms and light weapons. A major international conference will likely be held in 2001 to address the latter problem in particular. Yet serious challenges remain, especially with respect to transparency. For example, more countries need to submit data to the UN's Conventional Arms Register (which was created in 1992) and more need to use the UN's standardized instrument for the reporting of military expenditures. Obtaining accurate data on transfers of small arms and light weapons remains a difficult task indeed. More generally, the arms industry is undergoing a rapid process of globalization, which is also complicating both national and international regulatory efforts. And difficult challenges remain in strengthening the enforcement of UN arms embargoes.

With respect to controls on small arms, some welcome progress has been underway -- especially in South America, in Europe, and in Western Africa, with respect to controls over transfers of such arms.

UN-organized weapons collection efforts in Albania offer a good example of additional progress in this field -- collectively, these efforts illustrate what can be accomplished when the will is there. Last September, I attended a ceremony at which weapons collected in the Gramsh Pilot Project were symbolically destroyed by mechanical cutting in the main square of Gramsh in central Albania, a country that recognizes that disarmament can pay significant dividends for development. One of the Secretary-General's Messengers of Peace, actor Michael Douglas, is participating today in another weapons-destruction event in Albania, while also inaugurating the construction of a new road.

With respect to anti-personnel landmines, the entry into force within the last 11 months of both the Amended Protocol II of the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCWC) and the Ottawa Convention were significant steps forward in eliminating the scourge of landmines. Even more effort is needed, however, to encourage universal membership in these treaties, if the world is to achieve this long-standing disarmament goal.

With respect to developments within the UN's disarmament machinery, several developments are noteworthy. The CD agreed to expand its membership to 66. The UN Disarmament Commission was able to reach a consensus on international guidelines both for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and for implementing practical disarmament measures involving conventional weapons. The UNDC's inability, however, to reach a consensus on a Fourth Special Session on Disarmament constituted a major setback, as was the inability of the CD to agree on a programme of work during its last session. The Secretary-General, in his last report, called these two setbacks together "a source of grave and ongoing concern."

The inability of the members of the CD to agree on a programme of work, however, should not be attributed to any failure on the part of the CD as the world's single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. Progress has instead been hampered by the lack of a propitious international environment for major arms reductions. The deadlock in the CD is a symptom -- not the cause -- of the global stalemate on nuclear disarmament.

The Department of Disarmament Affairs -- though still the smallest department in the UN -- has proposed a budget of \$13.5 million for the biennium 2000-2001, or just less than \$6.8 million per annum. This will enable the Department to serve UN Member states by expanding its databases, providing information to permanent missions and non-governmental organizations, strengthening regional approaches to disarmament, and in general promoting multilateral disarmament norms. I encourage all delegations to visit our departmental web site, which contains useful information on disarmament treaties, links to our databases, a detailed description of our activities, and a bibliography of departmental publications. One of those publications, the annual *Disarmament Yearbook* has served for 23 years as a comprehensive guide to activities throughout the UN disarmament machinery. Other departmental publications will be made available to you today. I would also like to encourage all representatives to attend the department's forthcoming symposium on nuclear doctrine, which will be held in this room at 1:00 on 18 October. Previous symposia have examined the de-alerting of nuclear weapons and missile proliferation.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I wish to express my most sincere best wishes for success in the weeks ahead.