

Opening of the DISARMAMENT exhibit of Guided Tour
Monday, 23 October 2000 - 3 p.m.
East corridor, 3rd floor, GA building

Remarks by Mr. Dhanapala

- We had two major events within a week - the documentary on small arms which had its premier screening last Monday and today the opening of this exhibit. Together they illustrate the synergy that comes from the Department of Disarmament Affairs working together with Department for Public Information within the UN system - a concrete example of Secretary-General Kofi-Annan's Reform proposals being put into practice - in his words "Ato achieve a greater unity of purpose, coherence of effort and flexibility in response".
- This disarmament exhibit was redesigned to serve a need for information. As Mr. Hogen implied, while our mandated task to achieve disarmament remains no less urgent, the message about disarmament that the United Nations is disseminating today is remarkably different from what it was during the cold war. This space now reflects a new reality - the legacy of the cold war of yesterday and the promise of security through disarmament tomorrow. Like every good exhibit, this one tells a story to the visitor on tour. The story of a quest for security through the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the lowest possible levels of conventional weapons. It is opening today as the eve of United Nations Day highlights the centrality of the Disarmament programme as one of the 8 priority items in the United Nations agenda as well as the continuing concern for the subject since the first resolution of the United Nations General Assembly addressed the issue.
- The exhibit graphically portrays the problems that still exist, such as, the slowly growing world military budget, the remaining nuclear arsenals and military plans for their use and the complexities of the small arms proliferation issue.
- There has been much accomplished in the field of nuclear, chemical and conventional disarmament, especially in the last decade of the twentieth century. The scope of concerns that are dealt with at the international level has expanded. For example, the subject of conventional disarmament does not only include inhumane weapons, but also major weapons systems, small arms and landmines.
- While this exhibit provides a comprehensive look at all kinds of weapons, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons still remains the *priority disarmament issue* of the international community and of this exhibit. The content of the exhibit is in tune with the concerns of the Secretary-General on nuclear issues and small arms expressed in his report to the Millennium Summit this year. It also reflects the major preoccupations of the

150 Heads of State and Government who gathered at the Millennium Assembly on nuclear disarmament, small arms and landmines that were reflected in the historic Millennium Declaration.

- The tale does not finish there. The other half of the message is that much still needs to be done. There are clear challenges that lie ahead, like eliminating the continued dangers that nuclear war might ever break out, bringing the number of nuclear weapons down, reducing military expenditures, tackling the scourge of illicit trading in small arms and light weapons, creating international norms in regard to ballistic missiles.
- Millennium fever can be partially to blame for the impetus to reshape the disarmament feature of the guided tour. The moment was overdue and I am especially pleased that the Department for Public Information took on the job so willingly. Allow me also to express the deep appreciation of the Department of Disarmament Affairs to the Government of Japan for its generous support of this information product. I must also acknowledge here the consistent support of the Japanese people. Within the framework of observing the UN Disarmament Week, over 50 members of the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Japan Gensuikyo) traveled all the way across the Pacific Ocean to New York to present to the United Nations the *Appeal from Hiroshima and Nagasaki for a Total Ban and Elimination of Nuclear Weapons* together with over 100 million, including 60 million from Japan itself, signatures they collected for the Appeal.
- A special thanks is directed to Ms. Jan Arnesen of the Exhibits Unit for her professional taste and discernment in choosing the design for this exhibit and devoting many hours to making this project happen. Allow me also to thank particularly Mr. David Tarnow whose script developed the story of the exhibit in close consultation with the tour guides themselves. Congratulations and thanks also go to the designer, Ms. Stephanie Blackman and her team, and to Modern Age Production Company for excellent work. May I thank my own staff and especially the MDI Branch where Michael Cassandra was our midwife in the birth of this joint project.
- Finally, we are honored to have Michael Douglas with us today to say a few words to open the exhibit. As Messenger of Peace, he has taken time from his busy professional and private life to use the broad appeal that he has to raise consciousness about nuclear dangers and the proliferation of small arms. He is at the United Nations today at the invitation of the Secretary-General to share with other Messengers of Peace and Goodwill Ambassadors the reasons they joined the United Nations team. We deeply appreciate your efforts and support of the United Nations.