

Statement before the First Committee of the General Assembly

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United Nations
New York, New York



**Conference Room 4
United Nations Headquarters, New York
30 September 2002**

My congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, upon your election to guide the work of this Committee. Your experience in education, development, and disarmament gives you a solid foundation upon which to preside over the affairs of this important Committee. A special word of welcome to the representatives of Switzerland and Timor-Leste who join us as the 190th and 191st Member States of our organization. I also congratulate the other members of the bureau and pledge the fullest support of the Department of Disarmament Affairs (DDA) in all your efforts to make this a productive session.

And a productive session it must be, for some of the issues on the agenda affect the lives of billions of people across the globe in more ways than we realize or are prepared to concede. We are here not to carry on an empty ritual, but to sustain a process of strengthening international peace and security through measures that include the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction and effective controls over other types of deadly weaponry. Many of these issues -- especially those dealing with nuclear weapons -- will also shape the conditions of international peace and security of generations to come.

How this Committee approaches these challenges will depend a lot upon how it chooses to organize its work. In his latest reform report on "Strengthening the United Nations," the Secretary-General offers some timely and relevant advice to make the UN a more effective institution.¹ He states that it is "crucially important" for the General Assembly to continue its efforts to rationalize its agenda and to focus its efforts on "outcomes of greater policy relevance and impact" -- directly relevant, that is, to the goals of the Millennium Declaration. He means, in other words, results -- or in our context, results-based disarmament. This will require the Committee to work harder at eliminating overlapping items on its agenda, to stop wasting time and resources on repetitive reports and debates, to reduce duplication, and to consolidate closely-related issues into a coherent deliberative process.

Though the substantive and administrative challenges ahead are formidable, the benefits that disarmament offers to overcome them are as wide as they are rich. It has contributions to make in conflict prevention, in regional confidence-building, in alleviating threats to refugees, and in promoting the most precious human right -- the right to life. It serves the interests of economic development by channelling scarce human and financial resources into more productive pursuits. It helps in addressing the horrible environmental problems arising from past and ongoing weapons development and production activities. Through education, it helps in preparing a younger generation to solve its own security challenges without relying upon weapons of mass destruction or the threat or use of force. For these reasons and many more, one can see that disarmament serves literally all the most fundamental goals of the Charter of the United Nations. Everybody is a stakeholder in disarmament -- a core priority of the UN since its inception.

It is, however, sobering to consider the amount of work that remains to be done, especially with respect to a longstanding agenda item in this Committee -- the relationship between disarmament and development. Despite its other achievements, the recent World Summit in Johannesburg on Sustainable Development, for example, missed an extraordinary opportunity to address this issue. Though the Summit's Implementation Plan referred to peace and security as "essential" for sustainable development, it took no account of this year's global military expenditure, now estimated at over \$850 billion. Yet according to the UNDP's latest Human Development Report, all of the Millennium Development Goals could be met if official development assistance were increased by about \$50 billion -- just a fraction of current military spending -- and sustained at that level. Are we so trapped in a weapon-based security syndrome that we have forgotten how disarmament serves development goals?

As one way to deepen our collective understanding of the many benefits that disarmament is bringing and can bring to all of humanity and to explore new options, I have recently proposed -- for the consideration and sponsorship by one or more Member States -- the establishment of an International Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction, composed of distinguished experts from many countries under the leadership of co-chairpersons from the North and South. The Commission could examine problems relating to the production, stockpiling, proliferation, and terrorist use of such weapons, as well as issues relating to their means of delivery. It would

produce a report for the international community, one designed to stimulate some fresh thinking and to inspire some concrete actions to lead the world out from the shadow of these weapons -- the possible use of which is more likely today than ever before.

Progress toward these goals, however, is contingent, not inevitable. Speaking before the states parties attending the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the Secretary-General warned of the accumulation of "rust" in the multilateral disarmament machinery. In an ominous response to this warning, the United Nations Disarmament Commission failed to meet this year, the year it was to have commemorated its 50th anniversary -- while the Conference in Disarmament has just concluded its fourth successive session without any consensus on a programme of work. Next year will mark the 25th anniversary of the first Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament and its historic Final Document. Yet some 30,000 nuclear weapons reportedly remain in stockpiles around the world, annual military expenditures are rapidly approaching the one trillion-dollar level with no ceiling in sight, and 639 million small arms and light weapons remain in circulation around the world. And only two years after the nuclear-weapon states agreed on an "unequivocal undertaking" at the 2000 NPT Review Conference to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, we continue to see references to strategic doctrines that call for the use of nuclear weapons -- including doctrines that do not exclude pre-emptive use of such weapons even against non-nuclear-weapon states.

Will this year 2002 be best remembered for merely being the 50th anniversary of the birth of the hydrogen bomb, or for achieving something more positive for international peace and security? The answer is, to a significant extent, in your hands.

The verdict on this year's efforts in the fields of disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation so far remains rather mixed. On the positive side, I am pleased to announce to this Committee that Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have just agreed -- at an expert group meeting in Samarkand -- on the text of a treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. They also agreed that the signing of the treaty should take place as soon as possible. This is a significant achievement not just for the Central Asian states but also for the United Nations, which has been assisting this effort since 1997, pursuant to Resolution 52/38 S. It is all the more significant given that this region once reportedly hosted over 700 tactical nuclear weapons -- not to mention the over 1,400 former Soviet strategic nuclear weapons that Kazakhstan returned to Russia before joining the NPT in 1995.

Also on the positive side, the recent arms control agreement concluded between the United States and the Russian Federation to reduce their deployments of strategic nuclear weapons has inspired new hopes that this progress may one day spill over into the realms of actual disarmament, transparency, and verification, while progressively incorporating new disarmament commitments from other states that possess such weapons. The fate of the world's tactical nuclear weapons also remains a subject of unfinished business on the global nuclear disarmament agenda. The world would especially welcome new initiatives with respect to the actual destruction of nuclear weapons, along with their fissile nuclear materials and delivery

vehicles. I note in this respect that the G8 announced at their recent summit in Kananaskis a ten-year, \$20 billion "Global Partnership" initiative to assist the Russian Federation and other countries in disarmament activities relating to weapons of mass destruction -- and would hope that the UN system will be involved in the implementation of these activities.

In other positive developments, eight states have signed or ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty since the conference last November on facilitating the treaty's entry into force -- this raises the total number of signatories to 166, 94 of which have ratified. It is an encouraging sign of the support for this treaty that new diplomatic efforts are underway to achieve this great goal. I also welcome Cuba's recent decisions to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to ratify the Tlatelolco Treaty -- these are two additional steps forward for the universality of the global norms of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Adding to this progress, Member State participation grew significantly last year in two important transparency measures offered by the United Nations -- the Register of Conventional Arms and the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures. So far, 77 states have reported data on their military expenditures -- a 50-percent increase since 2000 -- and the 120 states that reported data to the Register exceeds even last year's record level of participation. Through its work with interested governments, its workshops and symposia, and its publications, the Department of Disarmament Affairs has been working hard to achieve such results. I encourage all Member States that have not yet participated in these measures to do so, and hope that one day all countries will join in sharing the benefits in confidence-building and transparency. I would like to take this occasion to note that South Africa has even enacted a law requiring its participation in the Register -- an example I hope other countries will follow in the years ahead.

With respect to small arms, Member States have been responding well to the Programme of Action (PoA) adopted by the Small Arms Conference in July 2001 -- and this includes their responses to the Secretariat's requests for national reports on their implementation activities, as well as some encouraging steps forward in monitoring compliance with Security Council arms embargoes especially in Angola, Sierra Leone, and several other African countries. The Group of Governmental Experts on the marking and tracing of small arms is well underway and is scheduled to complete its work in May 2003. While further strengthening the Secretary-General's CASA (Coordinating Action on Small Arms) mechanism, DDA is also seeking extra-budgetary support to establish a Small Arms Advisory Service to assist in implementing the Programme of Action. Thanks to the combined efforts of Member States and persistent efforts by groups and individuals in civil society, it now appears that small arms are firmly planted on the multilateral arms control agenda, where the issue so obviously belongs.

The issue of landmines -- the subject of nothing but bad news for so many years -- is emerging as a success story for disarmament, though many additional efforts will still be needed in the years ahead to address this problem in many countries. There are now 129 states parties to the Mine-Ban Convention and 66 parties to Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain

Conventional Weapons -- it is also noteworthy that both treaties expanded their memberships this year. In the interests of the innocent civilians who continue to die from landmines and the unexploded ordnance left over as legacies of armed conflicts, I salute the efforts now underway in the world community to address these serious challenges to human security.

Some other developments this year, however, are difficult to characterize as either progress or setbacks, since conditions remain highly variable. At the top of this list would be international efforts to reduce the risk of terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction. With respect to activities inside the Secretariat, the Secretary-General issued last month the report of his Policy Working Group on the United Nations and Terrorism, which contained 31 recommendations for action against this global threat, including several relating to disarmament.² Recommendation 18, for example, urges the consideration of the establishment of a mechanism in the Department of Disarmament Affairs to monitor global WMD terrorism developments -- on the basis of open sources -- and to submit a biennial report on the subject. The Department is now seeking support from private foundations and Member States so that it can fulfil such a role.

Yet on the other hand, many of the important treaties that help to address this threat fall short of universal membership, including the NPT and the Biological Weapons and Chemical Weapons Conventions (BWC and CWC). In addition, the twelve United Nations treaties on terrorism still do not have universal membership, while efforts have not yet succeeded in concluding either a comprehensive convention against terrorism or a convention on the suppression on nuclear terrorism. With respect to improvements in nuclear safeguards, the Director General of the IAEA has recently lamented that only 27 countries had brought into force Additional Protocols with the Agency. He has noted that much more needs to be done to upgrade the physical security of nuclear materials worldwide and to improve nuclear safety -- and he has also stressed that the Agency's funding levels are inadequate for many of its high-priority activities, including safeguards.

The collapse last year of long-standing efforts to conclude a Protocol to strengthen the BWC was greeted with disappointment throughout the world community, a development that has set back disarmament, non-proliferation, and counter-terrorist efforts relating to those deadly weapons. The challenge facing all countries will be to ensure that the resumed Review Conference of the BWC next November does not lapse into either a 10-minute revolving door exercise or two weeks of mutual recrimination. Surely the diplomatic skills of states parties can devise alternative scenarios agreeing on measures that can be accepted by all till the new Review Conference in 2006. A failure to achieve this compromise would be a betrayal of the hopes of the world in the face of persisting biological weapons threats.

The situation with respect to the resumption of weapons inspections in Iraq represents another challenge. It is gratifying to witness the outpouring of international support for the integrity of United Nations Security Council Resolutions pertaining to Iraq and the need for full compliance with those resolutions. As a general principle, all disarmament obligations should

indeed be rigorously enforced -- compliance is an absolutely vital issue for the effectiveness and credibility of disarmament activities. It is also a welcome development that the Government of Iraq has unconditionally agreed to the return of international inspectors. The sooner the world community can verify Iraq's compliance with its disarmament and other obligations under these resolutions, the sooner efforts can proceed to implement another goal found in those resolutions -- the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, a goal that all states of the region have explicitly or implicitly endorsed.

There are two additional items on the agenda that continue to present daunting challenges: disarmament and non-proliferation education -- and missiles. Reports on these issues by panels of experts established by this Committee are now before you for action this year. With respect to the former, it is somewhat astonishing to see that disarmament and non-proliferation are receiving so little attention in educational systems around the world, considering the gravity of the problems they seek to address. The education report, however, points the way for new efforts than can help remedy this situation and such efforts are surely needed by the next generation of world leaders and their fellow citizens.

With respect to missiles, it is gratifying to see that a panel of governmental experts from such a diverse group of countries has succeeded in reaching a consensus on a report on this subject, however thin it may be on concrete recommendations. That there is such a report -- and that the General Assembly has placed missiles on its agenda -- are both encouraging signs that the world community is slowly starting to rise to the challenge posed by the Secretary-General in 1999, when he called attention to the lack of multilateral norms in this field. The fact that states are working on new confidence-building measures and codes of conduct with respect to missile production, development and exports is encouraging, though there are still regrettably few indications that this progress is extending into the realm of disarmament, where it is arguably needed most. Efforts are continuing, however, to achieve a ban on the weaponization of outer space. We need to insulate this arena from an arms race -- just as we have done with the seabed and Antarctica -- and protect the space assets of all nations in the interests of international peace and security.

DDA has paid particular attention to the gender dimension of disarmament. You will recall that last year, DDA, in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, produced a series of Briefing Notes on "Gender Perspectives on Disarmament." The Department intends to continue to pursue its commitment to gender mainstreaming and has undertaken to elaborate a gender action plan, the purpose of which will be to translate the concept into deeds.

There are other areas, however, where we have witnessed very little progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. These would include the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continued non-compliance with its NPT safeguards obligations. Although the recent Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration states that both countries will "comply with all related international agreements," on 21 September the IAEA General Conference adopted a

resolution³ noting with regret that IAEA/DPRK discussions have yielded "no substantive progress" on important issues including the preservation of information and the implementation of safeguards. We welcome the prospect of other bilateral dialogues making progress on this issue.

In South Asia, we were recently witness -- once again -- to nuclear dangers reminiscent of the Cuban missile crisis. And yet foreign supplies continue to fuel the arms race in that region. Elsewhere, it is regrettable that the Pelindaba Treaty, the historic pact to ban the stationing of nuclear weapons in the African Continent, still only has 13 parties -- this is less than a quarter of the states that signed that treaty, which has not had a new member since 1999.

My remarks would not be complete if I did not salute the NGOs who bravely continue to work for the cause of disarmament -- despite lack of resources, discriminatory rules of procedure, and active discouragement by some Governments.

Mr. Chairman, it is impossible for me to cover all the issues that are on the agenda -- or, for that matter, all the issues that are not on that agenda but should be. What is most important is that we persist in our efforts to improve the conditions of international peace and security in this dangerously over-armed world. We will be judged not by the awards we receive, but by the obstacles we overcome in this heroic pursuit. We should recall the words of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit -- the distinguished former President of the General Assembly -- who said, "The more we sweat in peace, the less we bleed in war." Above all, we should never lose sight of the universal scope of the principles and values that lie at the heart of the peace and security system of the United Nations Charter -- a system that recognizes the equality of all states under the rule of law, and whose subjects must understand that the best way to advance their own national interests is to advance the common interests of humankind.

Only two years after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration we need also to be reminded of the fundamental values "essential to international relations in the twenty-first century" that were affirmed in the Millennium Declaration -- freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. The realization of these principles and values are viscerally linked to the process of disarmament.

¹ A/57/387, 9 September 2002.

² A/57/273-S/2002/875, 6 August 2002.

³ GC(45)/RES/16, 21 September 2002.