

Statement before the First Committee
of the
General Assembly



by

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Madam Chair, Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interact with this Committee on the subject of Regional Centers for Disarmament.

I attach importance to maintaining a dialogue with Member States on my Department's work; open dialogue and transparency are essential to ensuring that DDA understand well and respond to the needs of MS.

For many years, the UN has sought to enhance the role of regional approaches to disarmament and security as a complement to global efforts. The basic principle of complementarities have been stressed in many of the UN documents such as the UN GGE 25 years ago as well as UN Disarmament Commission a dozen years ago.

There are many actors in the region that could play useful roles in executing the tasks for disarmament and security. OAS, ASEAN, AU, OSCE are such organs. Where regional CBMs were introduced, for example, these have been the organizations that are key to the success.

Regional Centers under my Department on the other hand, have much less ambitious role as compared to the regional organizations. But nonetheless they have unique role as arms of the UN in each region, reaching out to the governments as well as the civil societies and the public at large, in pursuit of certain objectives in the domains of disarmament, non-proliferation, and security. They have had basically two functions;

It works as a useful conduit for the MS to convey their interests or concerns directly to the UN. UN in turn endeavors to reflect those in its activities. Nuclear Free Zones are one of the example of such a role for the UN.

Another role is for the Centers to disseminate information relating to these fields. Education is also one of the means to encourage MS to absorb what has been discussed and agreed in the UN legislative bodies. GA Resolution 60/83 says it is useful for three regional centers to carry out dissemination and educational programs in order to achieve positive results.

However, these are more or less passive roles of the centers. Today the regional centers are getting more proactive. At least I would like to see this happen. By saying proactive, I mean that the centers plan and carry out programs whose objectives are not only to propagate but also more aggressively to promote and facilitate certain tasks mandated by the legislative bodies of the UN.

For example, SCR 1540 calls for enactment of national legislations in controlling the flows of WMDs. RC for AP organized a seminar in collaboration with the Chinese Government last summer as the first step in this direction. This will be followed by Lima and Lome centers in the coming months with similar seminars. In concluding the Central Asia Nuclear Free Zone, RC in AP has assisted C5 MSs in many ways to finalize the text. And it will continue to do so.

The centers have to be proactive against the backdrop of changing security environments in the world. The challenges in non-proliferation have become real dangers that require cooperation and collaboration by the MS themselves at the national, sub-regional and regional level. Be it on SALW or 1540 follow-ups, MS are requested to establish national legislations to control the flow of goods and services. This in turn demands the regional centers to be more proactive.

Having said that, currently the three centers tend to be compartmentalized in their activities, with each of them pursuing their own objectives. Thus taken all three together, they tend to lack coherence. Perhaps it has to be partly attributed to the lack of clear guidelines from the Headquarters, which reflect the priorities of the legislative bodies. For example, RC in AP tends to have more activities with focus on general disarmament and non-proliferation while in UNLiREC focus is clearly on SALW. And in Africa, peace and security. We definitely have to respect distinctive characteristics of the security situations of each region. It is important for each RC to maintain its own regional identity in responding to regional specificities. They must continue operating under the Headquarters' delegation of authority while their individual work programs must be more coordinated and coherent.

I am now having a review of the activities of all three centers so that they could be more aligned to the priorities set by the UN legislative bodies and also could be more attuned to the needs of the countries in the regions. In this context I will charge the UNREC to deal with Central Africa.

MS would collaborate with the RCs believing they would provide good services to the national interests of each state. At the same time, if they are convinced of that, it is

imperative that MS of respective regions take greater ownership of the RC located in their respective regions.

MS's commitments must be, first and foremost financial, as the GA established that they operate exclusively through voluntary financial contributions. Simply put, the Centers cannot function without funds covering their daily operations, as well as the projects they undertake. Only your support and commitment to their operation will allow RC to maintain an effective regional capacity.

Finally let me touch on the coordination with other regional bodies and the one within the UN system. System wide coordination is an important objective in order to avoid duplications, ensure cooperation and secure effective and useful outcomes. Within the UN system, SG has initiated a High Level Group coordination among UN agencies and other regional/international organizations. DDA functions as the coordinator in the disarmament and non-proliferation area.

RCs also have maintained some coordination and liaison with regional organizations. However, there are much more to be done to improve coordination, particularly with AU and other African organizations.