

Video Message of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
Seminar "Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty"
Held by UNIDIR, Geneva, 1 July 2008

I would like to begin by thanking Patricia Lewis and her colleagues at UNIDIR for organizing this event to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the opening for signature of the NPT.

I recall well my own participation as a junior member of the Brazilian delegation to the Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament as it deliberated the questions raised by the drafts of this treaty. The classic inscription often found on old clocks—*tempus fugit* or time flies—could well be the motto summarizing today's event, for it frankly astonishes me that four decades have passed since this treaty was opened for signature.

Equally impressive has been the degree to which the treaty has approached full universal membership. In all honesty, if I had been asked in 1968 if 190 states would have joined the treaty by the time of its 40th anniversary, I would surely have been among the skeptics. I may have even had doubts that the treaty would in fact reach this particular milestone. As we know, for some time after it entered into force, several states without nuclear weapons still viewed the treaty with critical and even suspicious eyes.

Yet as the NPT came closer and closer to universal membership, something very positive happened. The treaty's growth in membership was accompanied by a gradual improvement in its various processes of accountability. Efforts to strengthen the review process were a prominent part of the package deal that led to the treaty's permanent extension in 1995 and were again featured in the consensus Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. The popular slogan in 1995 was "permanence with accountability," which could also be more accurately phrased as "permanence *requires* accountability."

I believe this rise in the perception of the need for accountability is just as important as the treaty's progress toward universality, and it will also be just as important in determining the future of the treaty. Accountability implies transparency—namely, the availability of hard facts about the implementation of all parts of the treaty and its inspirational preamble. Some of the treaty's review conferences resulted in consensus documents, and some did not. The closer one looks at the roots of the mistrust, suspicions, and intransigence that produced the failures, the more obvious it becomes that progress in accountability offers the best antidote, and this applies to all three of the treaty's key pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses.

We hear today many authoritative voices emphasizing disarmament. This relates to another historic event the world has marked this year—namely, the 62nd anniversary of the adoption of the UN General Assembly's first resolution, Resolution 1(I) on 24 January 1946, which set forth the goal of eliminating all weapons adaptable to mass destruction. The international community has not yet completed this historic mandate, but the full implementation of the NPT, with accountability, will surely help to move the world in this direction.

While I regret that I am unable to be with you personally to mark the NPT's 40th anniversary, I hope that the positive and constructive spirit that motivated the convening of this event, and the trend set by the I and II sessions of the Preparatory Committee, will carry over into a productive third session next year and eventually to a successful Review Conference in 2010. May this spirit and good will proliferate throughout the world.