

Message of Mr. Sergio Duarte

**High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations**

**to participants of the special meeting of
representatives of civil society:
“Resolution 1540: at the Crossroads”
held on 1 October at the United Nations Headquarters**



I would like to express my appreciation to the organizers of this special event which will enable representatives of civil society to contribute to the on-going comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). The Office for Disarmament Affairs is pleased to be a sponsor of this meeting.

Member States, invited international and regional organizations together with representatives of civil society gathered at the United Nations Headquarters to assess where the international community stands on achieving the objectives of resolution 1540 (2004). Charting the path ahead calls for a united front against the grave challenges facing human civilization which finds itself at a crossroad. One road leads to growing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction while another leads to fewer and fewer weapons until a world free of weapons of mass destruction is reached. We are to make the choice.

At its historic summit held on 24 September, the Security Council reaffirmed, in its resolution 1887 (2009), that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and their means of delivery, constitutes a threat to international peace and security. Amongst the measures aimed to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, the Council affirms its commitment to promote full implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) to achieve the key objective of preventing access by non-State actors to weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

Civil society has an important role to play, as an active participant, in the process of achieving the goal of a world totally free of weapons of mass destruction, a world in which such weapons would not be in the possession of either Governments or non-State actors.

Civil society has a remarkable record in promoting disarmament measures from stopping nuclear weapons tests, to prohibiting chemical and biological weapons, to banning land mines and cluster munitions. In all these cases, civil society was an active catalyst in bringing an end to activities that harm - first and foremost - ordinary people and disrupt their peaceful lives. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors - in particular to terrorists - brings new dangers;

threats of their use create additional anxieties and their actual use will result in considerable civilian casualties and utter destruction of normal life.

Today's event brings together a gathering of non-governmental organisations, academia and the industry. Many of your organisations have distinguished records of valuable contributions to disarmament efforts, at the national, regional and global levels. Some of you are already actively working in support of implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). Several non-governmental organizations made commendable initiatives to provide assistance to interested Member States in drafting legislation and in building capacities in related areas through workshops, education and training. This is an encouraging trend that should be reinforced through awareness-raising across civil society: educational centres, business, professional unions and other interest and advocacy groups. Awareness-raising should lead to involvement and direct actions in support of the objectives of resolution 1540 (2004). This will greatly reinforce an emerging WMD non-proliferation culture and advances disarmament goals.

I look forward to the interesting, thought-provoking ideas and discussions during this meeting, particularly on contributions that civil society can make to advance efforts to implement resolution 1540 (2004).

The Office for Disarmament Affairs has a long history of working with civil society on disarmament issues and is ready to strengthen this partnership in promoting the objectives of resolution 1540 (2004). We intend to continue the practice of inviting non-governmental organizations to regional workshops organized by ODA to build national and regional capacities to implement the resolution. We will be listening attentively to your presentations and discussions today to hear about new ideas and proposals.

I wish you a successful and productive meeting.