



**Remarks**

**by**

**H.E. Ambassador John W. Ashe**

**President of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations**

**General Assembly**

**to the**

**Tenth Meeting of the**

**First Committee**

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Ambassador Dabbashi, Chairman of the Committee,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, for the exemplary manner in which you have been leading this Committee in its important work, made all the more so in a world fraught with risks to national and personal security I also wish to acknowledge the Vice-Chairs and the Rapporteur for their contributions to your efforts.

Let me welcome the Disarmament experts who have come from various capitals, as well as from Geneva where the Conference on Disarmament is based. It is my sincere hope that this 68<sup>th</sup> Session will mark a significant advance in our common effort to advance the disarmament and international security agenda.

Distinguished Delegates,  
Colleagues,

It is appropriate, in any endeavour in this world body, that from time to time we glance backward, or around us, to take note of the signs of achievement, no less than of our failures. On the positive side,, we are pleased to note that this year the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). This is undoubtedly an outstanding recognition of the work of this body, as of that of the experts whose skill and courage on the ground have made a direct and practical contribution to the cause of peace. But at the same time, I will not be overly modest in my praise of our United Nations and you, its First Committee delegates, who in large measure form the source of many of our disarmament ideas.

Many of us will recall with pride the adoption, last April, of the Arms Trade Treaty, a historic instrument that will regulate the international trade in conventional arms. This treaty marks an important step towards enhancing transparency and strengthening accountability mechanisms in

the legitimate arms trade, and in this way represents a worthy contribution to strengthening peace and security.

Last April and May, we saw a successful Second Preparatory Committee to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which deepened substantive discussions and paved the way for next year's Third Prep-com.

Also commendable is the successful convening in Geneva of 'The Open-ended Working Group to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons, where the OWG successfully engaged in frank and constructive discussions on ways to advance multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

Finally, the first ever High-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament was held just a few weeks ago, lending new momentum to the important work and initiatives which are already underway.

Excellencies,

These many successes are laudable and noteworthy, and we justly celebrate over them. However, we must acknowledge that we continue to struggle in many areas. The revitalization process of the disarmament machinery is making only limited progress, and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty has still not entered into force. Furthermore, during September's High-level meeting, a number of delegations indicated continued frustration with the slow pace of nuclear disarmament, which some feel may be detrimental to the success of the 2015 NPT Review Conference and the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Distinguished Delegates,

In many regions of the world – including my own, the Caribbean, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is both a clear and present danger. It should consequently come as no surprise

that facing this threat is an enduring preoccupation in many regions and is considered a significant threat to our national and global peace and security. Not only do small arms facilitate a vast spectrum of human rights violations but they also exacerbate poverty, place heavy burdens on social and health care services which are already under severe stress, steal the innocence of our youth, inhibit access to social services and divert already limited resources away from efforts to improve human development and in so far as they are heavily connected to the trade in illegal drugs, they also represent a serious threat to national security and well being.. Given the gravity of this issue and mindful of its impact on both human and economic development, I urge you to continue looking at how to make progress in this area.

At the risk of repetition, please let me revisit another issue which was already mentioned in my statement for the High Level Event. As you know, the theme for the 68th session is “The Post 2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage!” and it will be supported by a number of events focused on issues related to sustainable development. In one way or another, each and every item we discuss in the General Assembly reinforces sustainable development, including items you are all discussing in the First Committee. The decisions you make here not only contribute to peace and security, but inevitably impact upon other aspects of the UN’s work. Let us not forget that where we put our time, resources and energy is an indicator of what we truly value. And so when we say we value education, healthcare, poverty reduction, and sustainable development, our actions and choices must likewise offer proof of that. With this in mind, let me recall a truism: resources for economic and social development, not weapons. Access to social goods and services is predicated on the existence of peace and security.

Seen in another light, while I did not say this in my acceptance statement or my statement opening the General Debate, on September 24<sup>th</sup>, peace and security form the overarching context for the pursuit of our sustainable development goals. Without such an umbrella, our other pursuits are in vain. The pursuit of the instruments of war and violence do not create peace and most certainly do not engender development

Distinguished Delegates,

As you approach the thematic discussions on each of the seven clusters of this Committee, I call upon you all to maintain a constructive and forward-looking atmosphere, with a firm focus on consensus building. I also urge you to respect time and resources allocated to this committee, as this is crucial for the overall success of our 68<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly.

Please rest assured that my entire team and I stand ready to work with you to ensure that your efforts here in this Committee reach a successful conclusion, and contribute to the global effort aimed at advancing the cause of disarmament and international security at all levels. I also remind you that in the pursuit of peace we are following in the most noble tradition of Mahatma Gandhi who lived a life of peace with all people and nations and taught us in his own words that “peace will not come out of a clash of arms but out of justice lived and done by unarmed nations in the face of odds.”

I wish you much success in your deliberations and look forward to your continued progress in making our world safer for all.

Thank you.