



United Nations General Assembly | First Committee

Thematic Debate on Nuclear Weapons

Statement by H. E. Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Permanent Representative

17 October 2016

Mr. Chairperson,

The nuclear threat has been at the forefront of the disarmament and non-proliferation debate for decades now. It is a complex and challenging issue; a peace and security puzzle which must be faced head-on if we want to begin solving it. Unfortunately, and in spite of some successful initiatives on nuclear arms control and non-proliferation, progress in genuine nuclear disarmament is still lacking. As it stands, we have faced now more than two decades of disappointment in multilateral processes dealing with disarmament.

The CTBT's entry into force is still pending, and it seems it will remain so in the short run, and we have not even begun negotiating a fissile material treaty. The Conference on Disarmament is moored in controversy and the Disarmament Commission has not been able to fulfill its mandate in the last seventeen years. Brazil believes that, to change this scenario, fresh and more ambitious approaches are needed.

It is in this light we see the recommendation, made by the OEWG on nuclear disarmament, of a conference in 2017 to negotiate a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. Such a treaty is not an end in itself nor a panacea to cure an otherwise ailing regime. It will be thoroughly compatible with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the wider nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

By doubling up on their commitment never to acquire nuclear weapons, non-nuclear weapon States which decide to take part in it will only reinforce their own credentials and the international non-proliferation regime. Further efforts needed to attain the complete elimination of nuclear arsenals can be pursued either within a framework laid out by the prohibition treaty – an approach supported by Brazil - or in parallel to it. In either case, the treaty will necessarily work in tandem with the review mechanism of the NPT and the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

A historic achievement like this reflects the international community's growing conscience on the urgent need to abolish nuclear weapons. Here Brazil would like to underline that the OEWG's results are not a shortcut to reach nuclear disarmament. It is actually part of a gradual process, which begins by setting out core prohibitions to be followed by elimination and verification arrangements.

Exploring all possible avenues to achieve progress, in a flexible and pragmatic manner, has always been Brazil's stance – and this includes making adjustments in light of changing circumstances. In this vein, we have also tabled a draft decision pertaining to the triennial reports regarding developments relevant to the Treaty on the prohibition of the emplacement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction on the sea-bed and the ocean floor and in the subsoil thereof, which had been requested, back in 1989, by Resolution 44/116 O. These reports were supposed to inform the Fourth Review Conference of the Treaty, which is yet to be convened after nearly thirty years. Considering this and that few States have contributed to the UNSG reports issued to date, our draft decision proposes that these reports be submitted again only when the General Assembly so decides.

Mr. Chairperson,

Brazil is convinced that the convening of a conference to negotiate a prohibition on nuclear weapons, as recommended by the OEWG, is a meaningful and concrete contribution to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Notwithstanding different national positions on joining such a treaty from the outset, a prohibition is a necessary element of any approach to nuclear disarmament, as it is widely recognized. We therefore urge all States to support the convening of this conference and engage actively in the ensuing negotiations, in order to voice their concerns and points of view and contribute to the best possible outcome.

Thank you.