



United Nations General Assembly | First Committee

General Debate

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

Permanent Representative

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(full version)

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your election as chairman of this First Committee. I take this opportunity to assure you of my delegation's full support for your endeavors. Brazil associates itself with the statement made by Egypt on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition and the one to be made by the Dominican Republic on behalf of CELAC.

Nuclear disarmament is a longstanding objective of the international community. From their inception onwards, the realization of the indiscriminate power of nuclear weapons and of the existential threat they pose to humanity has motivated several initiatives and proposals to pursue their elimination. However, far too little has been attained, and the threat posed by nuclear weapons to the very survival of civilization has not been abated, and may have even increased.

The continued reliance on those weapons of mass destruction and the implementation of wide-ranging modernization programmes by the major possessors sit ill with their stated commitments and legal obligations regarding nuclear disarmament. Such inconsistencies undermine the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, threatening not only future prospects, but also past successes, with dire consequences for the international peace and security landscape.

Mr. Chairman,

Against this backdrop of longstanding unrealized commitments, it falls upon all members of the UN to step up their efforts and to explore all open avenues to take forward nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament is a shared commitment, and while Nuclear Weapon States should bear the brunt of the responsibilities, Non-Nuclear Weapon States have the right and the obligation to remain engaged, especially when such action is direly needed.

Concerned with the limited progress made so far, Brazil supported the work of the OEWG on nuclear disarmament convened by UNGA Resolution 70/33 and the adoption of its final report. The OEWG held the most comprehensive debate on nuclear weapons in the past decades. Having lived up to the expectations set out in its mandate, the OEWG's report recommended establishing a negotiation path consistent with the Non-Proliferation Treaty's nuclear disarmament provisions. Particularly, Brazil strongly supports the

recommendation to convene, under the auspices of the General Assembly, a Conference in 2017 to negotiate a treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

Brazil is well aware that a prohibition is not an end in itself, and will have to be complemented by other measures, including elimination and verification. A prohibition treaty should be followed by protocols on those various issues, thus encompassing, over time, all measures required for achieving a world without nuclear weapons, in a flexible and pragmatic manner.

Nevertheless, a prohibition treaty will send a strong message that nuclear weapons can no longer be considered legitimate. It would strengthen the existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and hopefully tip the scale in favor of more ambitious commitments on other aspects of the disarmament agenda.

My country reaffirms the role of the NPT in the non-proliferation and disarmament regime and expresses its willingness to continue to work with all countries in its next Review Cycle, which begins early next year. It is incumbent on all treaty members to engage constructively in order to reach a successful outcome, including new and ambitious commitments on nuclear disarmament. A repetition of 2015 is unacceptable if the relevance and credibility of the treaty are to be maintained.

We reiterate our willingness to start negotiations on any of the agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament, under an agreed programme of work. The paralysis plaguing both the CD and the UNDC needs to be addressed with a sense of urgency. In this connection, we support the deliberations of the OEWG on the convening of a Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament (SSOD-IV), in order to update and improve the existing UN disarmament machinery.

Mr. Chairman,

Lack of progress in nuclear disarmament endangers the hard-won successes in the non-proliferation front. The illusion of security provided by nuclear weapons must be exposed, lest more countries feel tempted to develop them. Brazil therefore deems it unacceptable that nuclear arsenals continue to have an important role in military strategies and urges all States to exclude them from their security doctrines.

Brazil has vehemently condemned the recent nuclear tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Such actions undermine the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime and hinder efforts for the entry into force of the CTBT. We urge all parties to resume the six-party talks on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula as soon as possible.

The entry into force of the CTBT is the only legally binding assurance against the recurrence of nuclear testing and should be the first priority of States purportedly concerned with the treaty. Attempts to impose further obligations on countries which have already done their part and ratified the Treaty, while at the same time condoning the current status quo, can only weaken the prospects of it ever becoming law. In this regard, we consider Security Council Resolution 2310 (2016) counterproductive and disapprove the Council's meddling with a subject matter dealt with through a treaty-based mandate by the PrepCom-CTBTO without paying heed to its members' views and concerns.

The CTBT was negotiated and adopted not as a stand-alone instrument on non-proliferation, but as part of a wider framework leading to nuclear disarmament. The reaffirmation of the current status-quo adds up to the recurrent non-observations of the letter and the spirit of the treaty represented by continuing development of and modernization of nuclear weapons carried out through subcritical testing and computer simulations. Such actions undermine the treaty and the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime by promoting vertical proliferation, which the CTBT was supposed to curb.

Mr. Chairman,

The road to peace cannot be travelled on the back of militarism and threats of annihilation. Half a century ago, the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean took the bold decision, through the Treaty of Tlatelolco, to collectively renounce nuclear weapons and establish the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely

populated area. The Treaty's fiftieth anniversary, to be celebrated next year, is an important milestone in the path towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

The year of 2016 marks another important milestone in nuclear diplomacy, as Brazil and Argentina celebrate the 25th anniversary of the bilateral agreement that created the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) and of the quadripartite agreement - between Brazil, Argentina, ABACC and the IAEA. Through the creation of ABACC and the Common System for Control of Nuclear Materials, Argentina and Brazil conceived an arrangement that had previously been unthinkable in such a sensitive area.

The Brazilian-Argentine arrangement cannot be taken for granted. We replaced rivalry with cooperation; we created confidence where distrust used to prevail. Our governments did not shy away from mustering political will when necessary. This experience can serve as inspiration for other regions of the world, including for the establishment of new Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones.

In this regard, Brazil supports the strengthening of existing Nuclear Weapon Free Zones and the creation of new ones, including in the Middle East. Brazil urges all stakeholders to engage constructively in the next Review Cycle of the NPT in order to overcome their differences and fulfill the mandate set by the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, which remains valid and cannot be dissociated from the Treaty.

My country would also like to bring attention to the very concerning issue of fissile materials for military purposes, which remain outside any kind of international safeguard.

The Global Fissile Material Report 2015 from SIPRI estimates the total of HEU stockpiles at about 1370 metric tons, which is enough to produce 76 thousand nuclear warheads. And although there is a slight decrease in the HEU numbers, the total stockpiles of plutonium continue to grow, reaching more than 500 metric tons. These stockpiles are a liability not only in terms of nuclear security, but also to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, because they can easily be reverted to use in nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Brazil believes that the OPCW embodies the continuous effort of the international community to promote a world free of weapons of mass destruction. We recognize the Organization's capacity to uphold its necessary neutrality while discharging its mandate on challenging environments. Although it is noteworthy that Syria's declared chemical program has been dismantled to a great extent, we would like to highlight the importance of continuing cooperation and dialogue among relevant actors to clarify the outstanding questions related to the Syrian initial declaration.

Sadly, disturbing reports of incidents involving the hostile use of chemicals in the Syrian conflict are not confined to the past. While unequivocally condemning the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstance, Brazil reiterates its full support for the work performed by the OPCW–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism.

Mr. Chairman,

The Eighth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, this coming November, will provide us with an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of the regime by reaching balanced decisions that promote the implementation of all provisions of the Convention. Last August, Brazil, in cooperation with the European Union and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, gladly hosted a regional workshop in preparation for the Review Conference. The event was important to promote a better understanding of BWC issues and to enhance collaboration among Latin American countries with a view to a successful Review Conference.

As a developing country with a peaceful space program, Brazil attaches high priority to the objective of avoiding the weaponization of outer space. Since 2004, a growing number of states have adhered to a policy of no first placement of weapons in outer space. We perceive this political commitment as a confidence-building measure, as well as a first step towards an international legally binding instrument aimed at preventing the weaponization of outer space. Thus, understanding the urgency of undertaking further effective steps in

this regard we coauthored a draft resolution titled "No first placement of weapons in Outer Space". We invite all States that share the objective of preserving a weapons-free outer space to support the resolution.

Mr. Chairman,

Brazil favors the strengthening of multilateral norms and principles applicable to the conduct of States in the field of information and telecommunications technologies in the context of international security. This, however, cannot take place at the expense of the free flow of information and the respect for human rights, in particular the right to privacy.

The recognition that international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations apply to State behavior in their uses of ICTs paves the way for a peaceful and stable digital environment. In addition, the international community must examine the need to develop a specific legal framework to deal with the challenges we face.

Among other functions, such a framework will be important to introduce a list of proscribed behaviors which should include, inter alia, offensive first use; tampering with the supply chain, intentionally introducing vulnerabilities in systems or networks, and compromising the information security of other States.

Brazil encourages Member States to consider the adoption of a "no-first-use" norm with regards to offensive operations using ICTs. Such a norm will reduce the chances of a global ICT-related arms race, and reassure the international community that ICTs will not be used as tools of aggression.

In addition, confidence-building measures and increased international assistance and cooperation constitute important steps to achieve an open, secure, peaceful and accessible ICT environment.

Mr. Chairman,

The Arms Trade Treaty universalization remains one of the greatest priorities for the international community. The accession of countries, especially the major arms exporting countries, is paramount to avoid the continuing detrimental effects of unregulated international arms trade to world peace and stability.

Brazil signed the ATT on July 3rd, 2013, the very first day it was opened for signature. Brazil has long implemented a national export control system which already complies, to a large extent, with ATT obligations. Although slight adjustments in our legislation will be required in order to make our system fully compatible with the new obligations, the objective and purposes of the ATT are already part of our daily practice.

Mr. Chairman,

The success of the ATT negotiation process lays a roadmap for other processes facing political crossroads. Brazil believes this is the case for nuclear disarmament and, specifically, for the negotiation of a prohibition of nuclear weapons. The General Assembly has the legitimacy and capacity to move nuclear disarmament forward, and there is growing consensus that finally outlawing nuclear weapons, the only weapons of mass destruction which have not yet been banned, is a rational and viable way to break the deadlock on nuclear disarmament.

For the better part of a century, the nuclear threat has been hanging over humanity as a sword of Damocles. The promise of ultimate power has clouded the eyes of leaders and nations for far too long. It is time to lift the veil and face the truth. The risk of continuing to rely on nuclear weapons entails a cost that cannot be paid by any country. Now we have the opportunity to resume our path towards a more peaceful and prosperous world, free from the constant threat of annihilation. Future generations count on us to seize it. We must not disappoint them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman