



United Nations Disarmament Commission

**Statement by H. E. Ambassador Mauro Vieira,
Permanent Representative**

New York, 4 April 2017

(check against delivery)

Señora Presidenta,

Quisiera felicitarla por su asunción como presidenta de la Comisión de Desarme de las Naciones Unidas, así como a los otros miembros de la mesa. Nos complace ver una nación de nuestra región en la presidencia de esta Comisión. Le aseguro el apoyo de mi delegación en el ejercicio de sus funciones.

Brazil aligns itself with the statement delivered by El Salvador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

Madam Chair,

Nuclear disarmament is a longstanding objective of the international community. 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. It was the subject of the first General Assembly Resolution, which affirmed the objective of the "elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction". At the beginning of the work of this organization, the existence of such indiscriminate and destructive weapons already sat ill with the principles enshrined in the UN Charter. It is regrettable that, seventy-one years later, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remain unresolved issues on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission.

Brazil is also firmly committed to the objective of nuclear non-proliferation as a party to the NPT. In our view, the key to the sustainability of the non-proliferation regime lies in combatting the incentives to proliferate. Any approach focused exclusively on non-proliferation while ignoring necessary progress in nuclear disarmament and insisting on the reliance on nuclear deterrence by some is illogical. How can one legitimately argue that these weapons are too devastating to be owned by most, but can still be retained by a few? As former Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon repeatedly stated, "there are no right hands for wrong weapons".

The nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime faces growing strain, as demonstrated by the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference to adopt an outcome document. While States possessing nuclear weapons or which belong to alliances that foresee the resort to nuclear weapons persist in their unwillingness to significantly alter their reliance on those weapons, the grand bargain that allowed the NPT to come into being becomes increasingly harder to sustain, thus threatening both the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation pillars of the Treaty.

The continued existence of nuclear weapons is a threat to humankind. These weapons increase tensions throughout the world, foster suspicion and hinder cooperation. The limited reductions made thus far are, unfortunately, offset by the continued modernization and qualitative improvement of nuclear arsenals.

The Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Oslo, Nayarit, and Vienna, have deepened our collective realization of the grave immediate, mid- and long-term consequences of a nuclear weapon explosion, which would not be constrained by national borders, but would have regional and even global effects, threatening the survival of our planet. These devastating and indiscriminate effects would mainly affect the civilian population, which makes them incompatible with international law, particularly international humanitarian law and international human rights law. As governments we must view their elimination as a moral and ethical imperative and a legal obligation.

I reiterate Brazil's conviction that nuclear weapons must be prohibited and completely eliminated in a transparent, irreversible and verifiable manner, according to clearly defined benchmarks and timelines.

The UN took, just last week, a historic step in this regard, with the convening of the first session of the Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons leading towards their total elimination. We welcome the substantive engagement of all delegations present and are confident that the Conference will succeed in fulfilling its mandate of adopting a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons at the end of its second session.

In line with UNGA resolution 69/77, which recommended that the agenda of the UNDC provide for focused deliberations, Brazil believes that the Commission should concentrate its work on these three important aspects pertaining to nuclear disarmament: transparency, irreversibility and verification. This would ensure that the UNDC's work complements and builds upon the ongoing efforts in the Conference. Discussions on verification could build upon, *inter alia*, the principles agreed to in 1988 by the UNDC.

Madam Chair,

Brazil participates, on a regular basis, in confidence-building mechanisms at the multilateral level, such as the UN Register of Conventional Arms and the UN Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures. We also submit regular reports under the Program of Action to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the International Tracing Instrument. Furthermore, Brazil is a party to the Firearms Protocol and has signed the Arms Trade Treaty, currently in the process of ratification.

Confidence-building measures at the regional level are also of relevance. Brazil and our neighbors in South America are strengthening confidence and enhancing transparency in defense policies, including information on military expenditures and conventional arms transfers. While recognizing the important role of confidence-building measures, we are open to considering other aspects pertaining to the field of conventional weapons that could be dealt with by the UNDC.

Brazil favors the consideration of a third agenda item (also provided for in Resolution 69/77), and supports the proposal submitted in the last session of UNDC to have the prevention of an arms race in outer space as that item. We look forward to engaging in the informal consultations which will be convened on this issue. We highlight that the inclusion of a third agenda item should not detract from efforts towards advancing the other two items, nor should it serve the purpose of creating artificial linkages between different issues. Each topic must be considered on its own merits.

Madam Chair,

The multilateral disarmament machinery has played a crucial role in fostering dialogue and confidence among States, thus contributing to the promotion of peace and security. Regarding specifically the UNDC, to name only a few important outcomes of past UNDC sessions, I would underscore the previously mentioned 1988 principles on verification, which constitute a fundamental element of any disarmament treaty; the 1996 guidelines for international arms transfers; and the 1999 guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The latter has been of important political value to the development of free zones around the world, including with regard to the long overdue establishment of such a zone in the Middle East.

Notwithstanding these achievements, unfortunately, the UNDC has failed to fulfill its mandate for the past eighteen years. There is no rational justification for the UNDC not to reach agreement on substantive recommendations this year, which concludes the current triennial cycle. While no one denies the complexity of the current global security situation, we must not forget that this body was able to agree on recommendations to the General Assembly during times of great tension, such as the Cold War.

Greater political will is needed to break the Commission's deadlock. You can rest assured of Brazil's constructive engagement towards this objective.

Muchas gracias.