



BRAZIL

High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament

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Statement by

**H.E. Ambassador Carlos Antonio da Rocha Paranhos
Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs
Ministry of External Relations**

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Mr. President,

I wish to thank you for convening this UNGA High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, responding to a timely and very welcome initiative by the Non-Aligned Movement which was endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the UN membership.

Brazil associates itself with the statements delivered today by Cuba on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and by Egypt on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

Mr. President,

Over the last decades, the international community has shown the necessary political will to adopt international legally binding instruments with a view to banning some categories of weapons of mass destruction, notably chemical and biological weapons. Remarkably enough, though, no multilateral step has been taken towards the complete, irreversible and verifiable elimination of the most dangerous and destructive of all weapons of mass destruction - nuclear weapons.

As the Oslo Conference last March emphasized, the use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. Atomic weapons have no specific targets and do not spare civilians from the widespread suffering and destruction they can cause. They are therefore inconsistent with international law, in particular international humanitarian law, most notably its core principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. Unaware of national frontiers, these weapons can also inflict widespread, severe and long-term damage to the environment, human health, food security and the global economy.

For Brazil, nuclear disarmament is not only a legal obligation under international law. It is an urgent moral and humanitarian imperative.

Mr. President,

We fully concur with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon remarks that the "world is under-armed and peace is under-funded".

Indeed, precisely 50 years ago, in this same building, Brazilian Foreign Minister João Augusto de Araujo Castro already questioned the wisdom of devoting enormous amounts and resources to building up means of destruction and threat. Ambassador Araujo Castro then pointed out that the nuclear race was the foremost factor leading to the scarcity of resources that could contribute to the great tasks of socio-economic development.

Today, and even in spite of the current global financial constraints, nuclear-weapons States (NWS) continue to invest large sums in order to maintain and modernize their arsenals. In 2010, global military spending exceeded 1.6 trillion dollars. That comes to nearly 4.6 billion a day, which is itself almost double the United Nations' annual regular budget. In contrast, Official Development Assistance (ODA) amounted to only 128 billion dollars in that same year. It is estimated that half the amount annually invested in nuclear arsenals would be enough to achieve all internationally agreed development goals, including the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

Mr. President,

As long as nuclear arsenals continue to exist, the world will never be entirely free from the risk of a devastating nuclear detonation, be it intentional or accidental. As long as a limited group of countries consider themselves entitled to possess nuclear weapons, there will be a risk that other States and non-State actors may try to acquire or develop them. Therefore, the only effective measure against nuclear proliferation is nuclear disarmament.

The retention and further modernization of nuclear arsenals remain one of the gravest causes of instability. We cannot refrain from seeing their existence as a threat to international peace and security, the preservation of which constitutes the very "raison d'être" of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

For all the reasons I have mentioned – humanitarian, economic and security-related –, nuclear disarmament must be a top priority for the international community.

In this regard, Brazil would like to reiterate its firm support to the early commencement of negotiations of a clear, legally binding and multilateral commitment, on the part of all States, to nuclear disarmament, with clearly defined benchmarks and timelines. This framework shall lead to the prohibition of the possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and to provide for their destruction.

We shall renew our efforts within the multilateral system to achieve the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. This is a task incumbent not only on States, but on civil society and on every citizen in our world that does not and cannot remain indifferent to the horror posed by weapons of mass destruction, no matter who holds them.

Thank you.