

19 April 2010

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki,
President of the 64th Session of the General Assembly,
At the Opening of the Thematic Debate of the General Assembly on
Disarmament and World Security: Challenges for the International
Community and the Role of the United Nations**

Mr. Secretary-General,
Mr. Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to welcome you at the opening of this thematic debate. I would like to thank Mr. Alberto G. Romulo, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, for joining us today. We all count on the leadership of the Philippine diplomacy, particularly in the person of Ambassador Libran Cabactulan, President- Elect of the NPT Review Conference, for the success of the NPT Review conference that will take place next month here at the United Nations in New York.

My thanks also go to Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and for his continuous commitment and leadership in advancing the agenda of disarmament, and peace and security, and to the valuable support of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Last but not least, I would like to most warmly welcome and thank the distinguished panelists for their participation. All of them, experienced and highly successful academics and practitioners, will certainly bring fresh ideas that will enrich our discussions today.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nearly a decade went by with almost no significant advancement in the disarmament agenda. The lack of agreement in negotiations and recalcitrance in the fulfillment of existing obligations clouded the disarmament regime. The state of international peace and security got no better, with continuous waging of wars, eruption of civil conflicts, as well as concerns of proliferation of both conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

Recently, however, we have seen a new and positive momentum taking shape. This meeting is very timely in this regard. I believe this is a useful opportunity for Member States to exchange views on key issues related to weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons prior to some of the main meetings and conferences that will take place this year.

Undoubtedly, all eyes are focused on the 2010 NPT Review Conference. It is clear that the international community cannot afford to fail to reach a successful outcome that addresses, in a balanced manner, the rights and obligations related to the three pillars of the Treaty.

I congratulate President Obama and President Medvedev for their leadership and for the steps just taken towards reducing their nuclear arsenals. It is my hope that the recently reached agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation can be implemented as soon as possible. As the major holders of nuclear weapons and stockpiles, it is right that the two countries lead by example, so that it also paves the way for other nuclear weapon states to follow suit, aiming at the common objective of complete, irreversible and verifiable disarmament.

I would also like to commend President Obama for his recent decision to invite the IAEA to review the security at the United States neutron research center.

The international community should also acknowledge voluntary decisions in favor of general disarmament and nonproliferation. In the African Continent, Libya and South Africa took the brave step of abandoning their military nuclear programs.

The present positive momentum for disarmament should also be translated into concrete steps towards the prompt entry into force of the CTBT and should contribute to the adoption of the programme of work of the Conference of Disarmament.

Among the upcoming conferences and meetings on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, I would also like to single out the organization of the “Second Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapons-Free-Zones and Mongolia”. I am convinced of the importance of the contribution of the Nuclear Weapon Free Zones to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. I am particularly pleased with the entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty in 2009, which establishes the Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in Africa, and I exhort the establishment of other Nuclear Weapon Free Zones around the world, including in the Middle East. In this regard, all countries, including Israel, should join the NPT and comply with relevant UN resolutions in this field.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our times are marked by environmental challenges and by the increasing need for renewable sources of energy. The use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is a legitimate aspiration of all countries that are willing to foster their economic development. These aspirations should be met in accordance with the provisions of the NPT. It is fundamental that this right be exercised in full cooperation with International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Agency should also play an indispensable role in ensuring that non-proliferation obligations are met. It is fundamental to safeguard that nuclear energy and technology are not deviated to other than peaceful purposes. Nor that it can be accessible to non-state actors.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually supportive. As stated in the Global Zero Action Plan “as long as nuclear weapons exist, they will continue to spread”. Pursuing a steady path towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons in a foreseeable future is the most appropriate way to hinder proliferation.

Besides the challenges posed by nuclear weapons, the international community should not disregard the possible threats that stem from the proliferation of chemical and biological materials. All states that are parties to Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention have to do their part in its full implementation. By the same token, members of the OPCW must fulfill their obligations timely in the context of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I am sure that the panelists will provide us insightful and thought-provoking presentations on these and other aspects related to the weapons of mass destruction regimes.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is also fundamental for the international community to seriously address the production, use, export and import of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons. The figures of the armament industry are overwhelming. The smuggling and misuse of conventional weapons, particularly of small arms and light weapons, result in alarming number of casualties each year, particularly among women and children, especially in developing countries. The harmful and destabilizing effects of the unregulated transfers of conventional weapons need an urgent response.

This year several important meetings will also take place on conventional weapons, including the First PrepCom of the Arms Trade Treaty, and the meeting of the State Parties of the Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons, just to name a few.

If, on the one hand, nuclear weapons have only been used once in the history of mankind, indeed with catastrophic effects; on the other hand, conventional weapons fuel conflicts everyday around the world and constantly threaten international peace and security. Moreover, the imbalance in conventional weapons capabilities leads to threat perceptions and arms races, which in turn imperil regional and international peace and security.

I am sure that our panelists will shed light on the challenges and opportunities related to the current regimes of conventional weapons.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am confident that this interactive debate will also contribute to our efforts to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, by bringing for discussion to this body one of the most serious and pressing issue of our times such as disarmament.

I am sure that this thematic debate will contribute to this common endeavor.

Thank you.