

28 February 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,  
President of the 65<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Conference of Disarmament**

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to be able to address you today. Thank you for your invitation. We are living in very significant times, which offer great hope, but also much uncertainty. All these men and women deserve the support of the international community; their aspirations cannot be disappointed. Earlier this morning I addressed the Human Rights Council: I have called on Member States to shoulder their responsibilities.

Over the last few months, progress has also been made in disarmament affairs. The new political climate has led to progress in disarmament at both the bilateral and international levels. The Russian Federation and the United States, the two countries with the largest nuclear weapons arsenals, have managed to negotiate the new START treaty and are now also bringing it into force. This result is very important.

But the effort of disarmament does not stop at these two actors, however crucial they may be. All nuclear-weapon States must commit to reducing their own stocks in the same spirit. This is crucial. In autumn of last year, I visited Hiroshima. There, I felt all the horror and suffering caused by nuclear weapons. I met survivors and members of victims' families who are working with the greatest courage to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again. We, as representatives of the international community, must also make that effort, which should be a collective effort.

The great questions of our time demand responses which go beyond the capacities of countries taking individual action. We need action that is inclusive, effective and multilateral. We need a United Nations that is strong and takes a leading role in disarmament and non-proliferation.

The progress of the last few months provides us with a solid foundation. The outcome of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which was held in New York in 2010, augurs well for the international community's commitment to multilateral action. Success would not have been possible without the resolve of States parties to reach an agreement that was balanced in terms of implementation of the three pillars of the Treaty.

One of the recommendations of the Conference was that the Secretary-General should organize a high-level meeting on the Conference on Disarmament. That meeting took place in September 2010 in New

York and I had the opportunity to speak at that time. Some of you have already heard my message and it is the same today: the Conference on Disarmament is the sole permanent multilateral disarmament negotiating body. It is therefore an essential instrument. It must be strengthened and we must overcome any impediments. It is a question of credibility.

In the past, the Conference has managed to conclude key international disarmament treaties in complex geopolitical situations, including during the cold war period. Why does it no longer have that leading role? It is up to you, the Member States, to make the Conference a strong instrument. It is always desirable for decisions to have broad support, but the rule of consensus should not be an obstacle.

I am confident that progress is possible. The programme of work adopted in 2009, after several years' delay, is a good example. It provides a sound basis for resuming our work. I fully support Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his goal of revitalizing the work of the Conference, and in his proposal, made here last month, to begin informal discussions on a subject that is on the Conference agenda - a fissile material cut-off treaty. Of course, we would increase our chances of achieving concrete results if other outstanding issues were also discussed.

I also welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General, who has asked his Advisory Board to follow up on the discussions which took place during September's high-level meeting and to make recommendations on ways to revitalize the Conference. The General Assembly, as the Conference's founding body, is ready to contribute to this debate in the long term.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Disarmament is one of the most important and noblest goals of the United Nations and we must make every possible effort to achieve it. Disarmament is a vital contribution to promoting peace, security and prosperity for humanity.