STATEMENT

BY

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At the

General Debate in the First Committee
of the 59th UNGA on Disarmament

New York, 14 October 2004
Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by most warmly congratulating you (Ambassador Luis Alfonso De Alba) on your assumption of Chair of this Committee. I am confident that the deliberations of the Committee, under your able and skilled stewardship, will come to fruition. I also would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, the Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs for his comprehensive statement.

Mr. Chairman,

We are meeting here at a time when the concept of multilateralism, the foundation on which the Charter was envisioned, is at grave risk. It is regrettable to note that the Disarmament Commission has not been able to agree on an agenda after years of deliberations. It has again failed to adopt a substantive report on its work. The Conference on Disarmament, the only multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament, could not also come up with a programme of work blocking substantive work on disarmament. The deliberations in this Committee during the last one week have only reaffirmed these concerns.

We cannot overemphasize the need to identify specific practical and transparent methods towards complete disarmament and non-proliferation under effective international control. Failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work is a sad reflection of lack of political will, particularly on the part of the major players, in addressing the disarmament issues.

Bangladesh, however, welcomes the adoption of the Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and calls upon the Member States to take concrete and effective measures which would complement the ongoing efforts to strengthen multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

Mr. Chairman,

We agree with the Secretary-General, when he states in his report on the work of the organization, that the architects of the Charter were guided by a central idea that durable international peace could be built only on foundations of interdependence. Bangladesh, therefore, is a strong advocate for establishing supremacy of the rule of law and multilateralism in all areas of international relations including in the matters of non-proliferation and disarmament.

We are disappointed with the little progress made in with the Conference on Disarmament this year. Strong political will of the Member States is essential to push the process ahead enabling the Conference on Disarmament resume its role of negotiating new arms control and disarmament agreements with an emphasis on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We are also concerned at the slow pace of disarmament, violation of non-proliferation commitments and the threat of terrorism. Such developments jeopardize international peace and security and may increase the risk of new instances of unilateral or pre-emptive use of force.

We are concerned at the lack of progress on the part of the Nuclear Weapon States to accomplish the elimination of their arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament. We wish to stress that the threat to humanity derived from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use. We cannot but underscore the need to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons to save the world from the dangers of nuclear weapons. We urge that the parties concerned commence negotiations on this issue without delay.
We are also concerned that the development of new types of nuclear weapons are being considered. We wish to reiterate that the provision for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against Non-Nuclear Weapon States is in contravention of the negative security assurances that have been provided by the Nuclear Weapons States. Development of new types of nuclear weapons is also in contravention with the assurances provided by the Nuclear Weapons States at the time of the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that the Treaty would prevent the improvement of existing nuclear weapons and development of new types of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh views the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. We regret that the continued inflexible postures of some of the Nuclear Weapon States continue to prevent proper functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish to emphasise the necessity to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a Nuclear Weapons Convention. We refer to the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. We regret that no progress has been made in the fulfilment of this obligation yet.

Bangladesh reiterates its call for an international conference, at the earliest possible date, with the objective of arriving at an agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time to eliminate all nuclear weapons, to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and to provide for their destruction. We believe that total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

We note with concern the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space which have contributed to the further erosion of an international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and the strengthening of international security. Bangladesh calls for immediate commencement of substantive work, in the Conference on Disarmament, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Bangladesh welcomes the report prepared by the Panel of Governmental Experts on the Issue of Missiles in all its aspects and the convening of another Panel of Governmental Experts to explore further the issue. We are convinced that a multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory approach towards missiles in all its aspects will contribute to international peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh, a country with impeccable disarmament and non-proliferation record, is committed to pursue a universal adherence to the NPT. She has consciously and unconditionally opted for to remain non-nuclear. Our unequivocal commitment to the full implementation of the NPT in all its aspects emanates from our constitutional obligations to a general and complete disarmament. Bangladesh is the first Annex 2 nation in South Asia to have signed the CTBT. Party to almost all disarmament related treaties including the NPT, CTBT, CWC, CCW, APMT and the BWC, Bangladesh attaches particular importance to strict adherence. We consider that nuclear testing of any kind undermines nuclear non-proliferation, both horizontal and vertical, and constitutes a major threat to international peace and security. We have also concluded safeguards agreement with the IAEA including the Additional Protocols. These are tangible testitumies to our unwavering commitment towards the goal of nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and an eventual elimination.
Mr. Chairman,

There is a direct relationship between disarmament and development. May I refer here to the statement in the South Asia region. Bangladesh therefore, supports all measures partial and otherwise towards arms control, conventional and nuclear disarmament." Unquote. We urge all countries, particularly the major military powers, to curb their military expenditures and devote part of the resources made available by implementing disarmament treaties to economic and social development of the developing countries. It is our conviction that the Millennium Development Goals can be best achieved against the matrix of disarmament, reduction in military expenditure, devotion of resources for poverty eradication and sustained confidence building measures.

Bangladesh supports regional approaches to nuclear disarmament. We believe that confidence building measures through establishment of Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones (NWFZs) can significantly contribute to disarmament. We welcome all existing NWFZs and call for the establishment of NWFZs in South Asia, in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. The Kathmandu Process must be strengthened in contributing to regional peace and security in Asia and the Pacific. The concept of NWFZs on the basis of agreements freely arrived at should be pursued in all earnest to cover more and more regions. In South Asia, India and Pakistan must relinquish their nuclear option and join the NPT.

It is disconcerting to note the undue restrictions on exports to developing countries of material, equipment and technology for peaceful uses of nuclear technology persist. This is in contravention to the NPT provisions. Bangladesh call for an immediate and non-discriminatory fulfilment by Nuclear Weapons States of their obligations under Article IV of the NPT. We like to reaffirm the inviolability of peaceful nuclear activities and that any attack or threat of attack against peaceful nuclear facilities - operational or under construction - poses a great danger to human beings and the environment, and constitutes a grave violation of international law, principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and regulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We are deeply concerned over the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world. We urge for effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects adopted at the United Nations Conference held from 9 - 20 July 2001 in New York which outlines a realistic, achievable and comprehensive approach to address the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on the national, regional and global levels.

Bangladesh is greatly concerned at the increasing number of civilians, including women and children, that fall victims of anti-personnel mines in conflict and post-conflict situations. We believe that there is a need for the international community to provide necessary assistance to landmine clearance operations as well as rehabilitation of victims and their social and economic reintegration in the landmine affected countries. We urge those States, that have not yet done so, to become parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

We welcome with satisfaction the adoption of the General Assembly resolution on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. It is important to note that the most effective way of preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is through the total elimination of such weapons.
Mr. Chairman,

We remain convinced that establishment of rule of law and multilateralism is the only option for us in dealing with the issues relating to international peace and security including disarmament. Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and strengthening of the United Nations systems assume paramount importance in this context. Next year, we will be celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. It is a moment for reflection and to explore new ideas that can ensure collective security in all its senses for all the nations on earth. That was both the vision and the objective of the founding fathers of the United Nations which we are pledge-bound to uphold.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.

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