Statement by
H.E. Mr. Alfred M. Dube
Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Botswana to the United Nations

At the
General Debate of the First Committee

Monday 11 October, 2004
New York

Please check against delivery
Mr. Chairman,

I would like to join those who have spoken before me in congratulating you and your bureau, following your election. My delegation is confident that your vast experience will serve us as we grapple with issues of Disarmament and International Peace and Security. I assure you of our complete support and cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation shares concerns about the gravity of the circumstances surrounding the deadlock in the disarmament machinery. The failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a Programme of Work has set a very dangerous precedence on the disarmament agenda.

We call on the concerned parties to bring this impasse to a speedy conclusion. The lives of millions across the globe depend on us finding solutions to the world nuclear issues in order to make progress towards our collective security.

The failure of the Conference on Disarmament has also adversely affected the convening of the Disarmament Commission and the Non-Proliferation Treaty PrepCom meetings. We strongly urge those who have impeded progress in pursuit of narrow national interests, to rejoin the international community in their fight to rid the globe of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)’s and conventional weapons.

Botswana continues to abide by the principles of the international WMD treaties and conventions to which it is party. To date we have acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We urge all states to abide by the NPT, and comply by all NPT articles, including the agreed 13 steps towards Nuclear Disarmament. Furthermore, we to join those who believe that non nuclear states should be assured against attack by nuclear weapons states. We, therefore, urge the Conference on Disarmament to facilitate the move towards a binding international instrument in that regard.

In the absence of an international agreement, the concept of nuclear weapons free zones must be vigorously promoted and expanded. We welcome the ratification by Madagascar and Equatorial Guinea of the African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty (The Treaty of Pelindaba) which has increased its acceding members to 19. We strongly urge those African nations who are yet to sign and ratify the treaty to do so at the earliest in order to achieve the target of 28 states required for the Pelindaba Treaty to come into force.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation attaches the utmost importance to the twin issues of small arms and light weapons, as well as anti-personnel landmines. These two classes of conventional weapons represent a far greater danger to the African region. Millions have been maimed in the past, and continue to be maimed by these unassuming and inconspicuous weapons. Botswana is party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their destruction.
We hope that the proceedings of the First Review Conference will significantly benefit from the common African position on Anti-Personnel Landmines, recently adopted in New York last month. Focused and united consideration of the challenges in this area is of the utmost importance if this menace is to be adequately addressed. Botswana however feels that it is not enough to deal only with the clearing of mined areas and the assistance to victims. We reiterate our call for the total ban on the production, stockpiling, export and use of anti-personnel mines. These weapons deserve the same level of abhorrence that we reserve for nuclear weapons.

We also subscribe to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. To that end we will continue to participate in the process of the Open Ended Working Group to negotiate an international instrument to enable states to identify and trace in a timely and reliable manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation has read with some interest the Report by the Group of Governmental Experts on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development in the current international context, as well as the future role of the Organisation in this connection.

In particular we were pleased to see reference to the importance of investing less human and financial resources to military expenditure, and more to the ongoing effort to eradicate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Botswana shares this vision, which has always guided our development planning process.

The report also aptly outlines the nexus between security, disarmament and development. Security is in fact described as the third pillar of the disarmament-development relationship. Indeed lack of security can be caused by non-military situations such as economic instability, health crises, environmental degradation and resource scarcity, and gross violations of fundamental human rights.

We commend Ambassador Rivas for his tireless efforts as Chairman of the Group and pledge our support towards his principled resolution on the relationship between disarmament and development.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, my delegation looks forward to greater progress being made in the discussion on disarmament and international security in this Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.