Permanent Mission of the United Republic of Tanzania
to the United Nations

Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT BY

H.E. DR. AUGUSTINE P. MAHIGA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

IN THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE
OF THE 59TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MONDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2004
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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to join others in congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We trust that your rich experience will guide our work to a successful conclusion. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. You can all be assured of my delegation’s full support.

I should also express my delegation’s thanks to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his opening remarks. We appreciate very much the good job that the Department for Disarmament Affairs is doing.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation wishes to express its confidence in the work of this Committee which is charged with the task of ensuring a peaceful and secure world. In this regard, I wish to reaffirm Tanzania’s faith in the United Nations Organization, particularly its crucial role in the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. This is the most rational approach in securing international peace and security.

In the past year there was little progress in the field of disarmament. Nothing substantial was achieved since we met here during the 58th Session of the General Assembly to advance the disarmament process. We need to take more proactive measures to remove the ever-threatening specter of weapons of mass destruction; those weapons, in particular nuclear weapons, whether in the hands of states or non-state entities, pose the greatest threat to human civilization.

Tanzania welcomes Libya’s decision to get rid of its nuclear and chemical weapons programmes. All countries that possess weapons of mass destruction should emulate Libya’s example. We see no moral or military justification for any country to continue possessing and relying on weapons of mass destruction for its defence or deterrence when their use—intentionally or accidentally—can trigger total annihilation of our world and its civilization.

Mr. Chairman,

With seven months remaining before the 2005 NPT Review Conference, much needs to be done to make sure we achieve a successful Conference. Despite the fact that we all agree that the NPT is the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, some States do not seem prepared to honor their part of the agreement.
It is regrettable that as we come closer to the 2005 NPT Review Conference, the 13 practical steps agreed to in 2000 have not been implemented. This is in spite of the fact that nuclear weapon States unequivocally undertook to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. Worse still, we are witnessing new nuclear doctrines, including the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States. As if this was not enough, new types of more sophisticated and concealable nuclear weapons and their delivery systems are being researched and developed. All this undermines and contravenes the spirit and letter of the NPT.

Mr. Chairman,

The proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction is a source of grave concern to my delegation. More ominous is the danger of terrorists acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction. In view of this, my delegation believes that the best way to deny terrorists easy access to weapons of mass destruction is to close all loopholes that might exist. These should include the strengthening of international instruments that deal with nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. In this context, the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention should be encouraged. In the same vein, we call on all States Parties to fully comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Equally important and urgent is the need to reach, as soon as possible, an agreement on a strong verification mechanism for the Biological Weapons Convention. The longer we delay in reaching an agreement, the more are the chances of proliferation of biological weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased to inform the Committee that on the 30th of September 2004 Tanzania ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We have no nuclear capability but we believe our signature to the Treaty confirms that the CTBT is one of the most important instruments for advancing global nuclear non-proliferation. The Treaty is an effective confidence building measure in ending the nuclear arms race, as well as the process of eliminating nuclear weapons. We call on those who have not done so, and in particular those whose ratification is required for its entry into force, to ratify the CTBT to lead us in this decisive global undertaking.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development. It is important for the international community to seriously consider and implement recommendations put forward by the Group. Chief among them is the recommendation that there is a need to cut down the ever-rising military expenditures and release the funds for socio-economic activities. The much talked about peace dividend following the end of the cold war has not yet come to pass.

Mr. Chairman,
My delegation reaffirms its support to efforts aimed at combating the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. The devastation wrought by small arms in regional and internal conflicts in recipient countries in the developing world has fuelled violent conflicts, caused unrelenting civilian deaths, destruction of livelihoods and mass human displacements. We need concerted international action to arrest this situation. Tanzania has been and will continue to participate in all sub-regional, regional and international processes aimed at addressing this problem.

Next month, States Parties to the Ottawa Convention will meet in Nairobi, Kenya for the First Review Conference. Significant progress has been made at national, regional and international levels in the campaign against anti-personnel mines. Mines as instruments of warfare are anachronistic and inhumane. Tanzania has passed that threshold by destroying all its mine stockpiles ahead of the Conference. Nevertheless, the Ottawa Convention lacks universality and still faces many challenges. We believe that humanity will be served better if all countries ratified the Treaty while at the same time the international community increased its assistance to mine-affected countries.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation fully supports efforts aimed at improving the effectiveness of the methods of the First Committee. The reform of the First Committee should be part of the revitalization of the General Assembly as a whole. It should not be done in isolation. More important however, the reform should address the most urgent challenges that we face today - general and complete disarmament. We will not have achieved anything if reforms do not bear fruit.

In conclusion, I wish to caution the First Committee to avoid falling into the trap that the Disarmament Commission has fallen into. We should not allow ourselves to be turned into another Conference on Disarmament, which has been stalled for the past eight years.

I thank you.