REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

STATEMENT

by

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at the

General Debate of the First Committee
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Mr. Chairman,
Allow me at the outset to express sincere congratulations to you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee during this 59th session as well as to the other members of the bureau. Your leadership, Mr. Chairman, will be essential to the success of our deliberations.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Representative of the Bahamas on behalf of the Caribbean Community. In addition, I wish to offer a national perspective on a few points of particular interest.

As a small and vulnerable state, Guyana holds important the system of collective security offered by the United Nations. This, together with new risks of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction pose serious dangers to international peace and security. It is as we move beyond the prescriptions of the preliminary and procedural, and the spirit of negotiation is fully explored, only then can we bring about the required attitudinal shift in this august body.

We are forcibly reminded that the dangers of nuclear catastrophe are still very real and present. It is impossible to guarantee in an unstable world such as ours that nuclear weapons will not be used, either intentionally or inadvertently. Only a complete prohibition of such weapons, binding upon all states, would be able to reduce the risk of a nuclear disaster. Nuclear experiments should be harnessed only to peaceful purposes in service to global development. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as well as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, while admittedly useful as restraints, are too limited to provide the assurance needed.

Mr. Chairman,
My Government therefore urges the international community to move swiftly for a total elimination of these weapons coupled with an undertaking to discontinue their production. Simultaneously, we must redouble our efforts to curb the flow of conventional weapons which serve to fuel conflicts throughout the world.

Mr. Chairman,
We note with concern that the maintenance of international peace and security remains beset by many obstacles, not least of which is the lack of progress in the Disarmament agenda. This, together with new risks of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction pose serious dangers to international peace and security. There are today more peace-keeping operations than the international community appears able or willing to sustain. Increasingly, we will have to invest more in preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peace-building, but also in development, to fully address and treat the root causes of tension. This approach is valid not only for inter-state but also for intra-state conflicts which have multiplied. The initiatives taken by the UN Regional Centres are commendable and we look forward to more work conducted in the area of disarmament and development.

The urgent need for strengthened international support in addressing these concerns cannot be overemphasized. We would urge donor governments to continue to maintain and increase their financial support where possible.
Mr. Chairman,
We strongly support the work being done on the drafting of an international instrument on Small Arms and Light Weapons, my Government continues to be engaged in this very important process. It is my Government’s view that, optimally, a legally binding document would ensure progressive results, given the destructive impact of this trade, serious consideration of this subject should remain a priority in the work of the First Committee. My delegation also welcomes the work being done to eliminate anti-personnel landmines and looks forward to the outcome of the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World to be held in November this year.

Mr. Chairman,
Above all, we must intensify our search for a collective system of security upon which all states can rely for their protection. The outline of such a system is to be found in the United Nations Charter; we need only to build upon it to ensure its practicability. This committee must vigorously reaffirm and be cognizant of the priorities of all member states, especially developing countries and the international community, as carving the blueprint for future progress and development become increasingly important.

Mr. Chairman,
In conclusion, my delegation attaches great importance to reaching general agreement on how this committee may be transformed into an organ that enjoys the confidence and support of all states. With regards to improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee, my delegation stands ready to contribute, for only by way of a truly collaborative and inclusive approach can we produce outcomes satisfactory and binding on all member states.

Mr. Chairman,
Clearly, our concerns have changed to accommodate the circumstances of today’s world, as we continue to serve the cause of global peace and security, thus the imperative for change should become irresistible.
I thank you.