FIRST COMMITTEE
FIFTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

GENERAL DEBATE
ON DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Statement by
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To the United Nations

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Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by offering you and all members of the Bureau the Lao PDR delegation’s warmest congratulations on your respective elections. We trust that under your wise leadership the work of our committee will be steered to a successful conclusion. We assure you of our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your delegated mandate.

Mr. Chairman,

We align ourselves fully with the statement made earlier by the distinguished Permanent Representative of the Union of Myanmar, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Nonetheless, we would like to highlight some underlying points as follows:

Despite some progress made in political discussions towards the resumption of the Conference on Disarmament whose role is to negotiate new arms control and disarmament agreements, there is yet no light at the end of the tunnel on this global exercise of vital implication to international peace and security. We agree to the UNSG’s assessment made in his report on the Work of the Organization presented to the current GA session that “several issues relating weapons of mass destruction remained of great concern to the international community. These included the slow pace of disarmament, violations of non-proliferation commitments, evidence of a clandestine nuclear network 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.” Thus, there are uphill efforts for the world peace-loving community to undertake in order to address the risks of a potential nuclear war towards a world free of WMDs.

Furthermore, our planet continues to be plagued by lingering armed conflicts, acts of aggression and violence, terror, interferences in the internal affairs of states, ethnic strife, and civil wars. These instances of instability and intolerance have not only undermined development gains and endeavours of the majority of nations, in particular developing, but could also lead to the risk of use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction against humankind.

In the face of such dangerous situation, integrated and coordinated effort must be intensified by the international community to address the root-causes of the frictions, and put an end to the flash points around the world. Primarily, greater stride must be made in the holistic pursuit of the world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. To this end, we maintain that urgent consideration must be given to the conclusion of a universal unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to Non-Nuclear Weapon States. It is our fervent and legitimate hope that the ASEAN-sponsored draft resolution initiated by the Union of Myanmar on nuclear disarmament would be rendered considerate support from all member states, in particular Nuclear Weapons States.
Mr. Chairman,

The Lao PDR remains of the view that the absolute and most credible guarantor for the ban on use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is total elimination of nuclear weapons. We, therefore, welcome all efforts undertaken at the international, regional and national levels, aimed at reinforcing measures to reduce nuclear risks and dangers. We add our voice to the NAM’s call for an international conference, at the earliest possible date, with the objective of arriving at an agreement on a phased and time-bound program for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and to provide for their destination. In this context, we reiterate our support to the World Leaders’ call as contained in the Millennium Declaration for stronger effort towards the elimination of weapon of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways and means of eliminating nuclear dangers.

Mr. Chairman,

We continue to share the concern of the majority of member states over the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defense systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space which have, inter alia, contributed to the further erosion of international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and strengthening of international security. The abrogation of the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABM) brings new challenges to strategic stability and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We can not stop being alarmed that the implementation of a national missile defense system could trigger an arms race and the further development of advanced missile systems and an increase in the number of nuclear weapons.

In our view, the NPT should remain a cornerstone for the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons. It is essential that all State parties, especially Nuclear Weapons States, to this important Treaty fulfill their obligations provided therein. However, we regret to note the inability of the Third Preparatory Committee to agree on the agenda and substantive recommendations to the 2005 NTP Review Conference.

Cognizant of the significant implication of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to the process of nuclear disarmament, the Lao PDR has ratified the Treaty since October 2000. This shows our government’s strong commitment to nuclear disarmament and reflects our aspiration to live in peace and build a world free from nuclear threats. However, in order to make this Treaty effective, it is necessary for other State Signatories who have not done so to ratify it to ensure its earliest universality. We also stress the need for the full and effective realization of the CTBT objectives by all States Signatories, particularly the Nuclear Weapons States
Equally essential for the maintenance of international and regional peace and security is the universal adherence to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), especially the strengthening of it through multilateral negotiations for a legally binding Protocol to the Convention. We are also of the view that the threat of biological weapons as instruments of war and terror has stressed the necessity and urgency to ensure the effectiveness of this Convention. In this regard, strong emphasis must be put on the need for all State Parties to pursue the objectives set forth by the Fourth Review Conference and underlined that the only sustainable method of strengthening the Convention is through multilateral negotiations aimed at concluding a non-discriminatory legally binding agreement.

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) constitutes a positive and helpful step towards the goal of global nuclear disarmament. As a State Party to the Bangkok Treaty establishing the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ), the Lao PDR has made everything possible to contribute to the ASEAN collective efforts in this respect. Yet, for the Treaty to be effective, a Protocol annexed to it must be acceded by Nuclear Weapons States. We therefore join other ASEAN member states in welcoming the announcement by the PR of China on its readiness to accede to the Protocol. We hereby renew our call for other Nuclear Weapons States to accede to the Protocol at an earliest date.

Mr. Chairman,

In view of the above situation, evidently, one of the most urgent tasks at the United Nations is to seriously work together towards a complete end to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. To accomplish this task, we believe that no effort must be spared to get the disarmament process back on track. Furthermore, the root-causes of instability and conflicts, above the poverty, ought to be dealt with in a more responsible manner. Only by doing so, we will be able to gradually build a world filled with peace and free from the threats of weapons of mass destruction.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.