Statement

by

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General Debate of the First Committee

New York, October 12, 2004
Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you upon your election to preside over the affairs of this Committee. I am confident that your leadership, experience and wisdom will contribute to a successful outcome of our deliberations. My congratulations are also extended to the other members of the Bureau.

Mr. Chairman,

Recent developments in the field of disarmament and international security continue to be a matter of concern for the international community. The report of the Secretary General on the work of the Organization outlines the challenges ahead and the way forward.

Indeed, the highest negotiating body in Disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament is yet to overcome the stalemate which it finds itself in, while several issues related to weapons of mass destruction remained unresolved. These include the slow pace of disarmament, violations of non-proliferation commitments, evidence of a clandestine nuclear network and the threat of terrorism.

The threat of terrorism and the international response against this evil has brought new concerns related to the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. The fight against terrorism, as outlined in the report, requires broad-based international cooperation as we all agree on the imperative to safeguarding these rights and fundamental freedoms.
We share the view that to effectively tackle terrorism, we must address its causes and roots. Multilateralism and collective solutions to global concerns, within the framework of the United Nations, are essential with a view to creating a climate of mutual trust and confidence.

Arms race, including nuclear weapons, and non-compliance with relevant United Nations legal instruments have long been a source of concern and also a source of insecurity, with the risk of weapons of mass destruction falling in the hands of terrorists. In the same vein, vertical and horizontal proliferation of conventional weapons, including Ballistic Missiles, continue to be a matter of concern for international peace and stability.

We therefore join our voice in calling for Conference of Disarmament to resume its duty of negotiating new arms control and disarmament agreements, as well as the universalization of relevant disarmament international instruments in place, such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Conventions on Chemical and Biological Weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary-General has also alluded in his report to the fact that violent internal conflicts continue to engulf millions of civilians around the world, drawing in neighbouring countries and thus posing an even wider threat to international peace and security.

Armed conflicts not only lead to increased military spending, but also to widespread and uncontrolled availability of arms in the concerned countries. In addition, armed conflicts increased availability of small
arms and light weapons that have a great potential use in criminal activities and destabilization.

On the other hand, anti-personal landmines widely used during armed conflicts, besides their lethal effects in killing and maiming innocent civilians, undermine post-conflict-peace building, by impeding the use of land for development purposes. Moreover, while their purchase is relatively affordable, huge financial resources are required to fund demining and providing care to the victims.

As far as Mozambique is concerned, we are still grappling with the effects of a war that ended 12 years ago in the country. We still have millions of anti-personnel landmines laid down across the national territory that adversely affect the re-settlement of the populations and the smooth resumption of vital economic activities, as well as the availability of small arms and light weapons mostly used in criminal acts, which contribute to insecurity.

For these reasons that Mozambique has been at the forefront of international action to curb both the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as well as in the global efforts to ban anti-personnel landmines.

We view the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, as a critical step to minimize the easy availability and unlawful use of these arms that are posing a serious threat to the security, stability and development of poor countries. We also welcome the launching in June 2004 at the United Nations, of
multilateral negotiations on an international instrument to identify and trace illicit small arms, as a further step to devise the appropriate legal and political framework for international cooperation to eliminate the illicit trade and brokering of small arms and light weapons.

My Government supports the holding next November/December 2004, of the Nairobi Summit for a Mine-Free World, a review conference that will provide an excellent opportunity for strengthening our resolve of riding the world of antipersonnel landmines. We sincerely hope that by then we should be drawing closer to realizing the dream of universalizing the Ottawa Convention, thus ensuring for good that the world will no longer experience the threat of anti-personnel landmines.

In this connection, I would like to highlight the adoption of a Declaration on the African Common Position on anti-personnel landmines by the Ministerial Meeting held last month in New York. I hope that this Declaration will be a valuable input to the Nairobi Summit.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to underscore the need for strengthening international cooperation in the materialization of international instruments related to disarmament. In fact, in the area of conventional weapons, much is being done in developing countries to implement commitments entered into, particularly in actions to ban anti-personnel landmines and curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Affected countries, individually and collectively through sub-regional and regional arrangements have been making tremendous efforts to tackle
the severe consequences of these inhumane weapons and alleviate the suffering of their peoples.

However, all these efforts will be ineffective and may be bound to failure if adequate international assistance is not rendered. We therefore call upon the international community to provide international assistance to ensure the materialization of commitments made in relevant international instruments.

Finally, on the issue of reforms, we sincerely hope that they will reinforce the principle of providing better services to member states particularly those most in need. Our aim is to see a strong United Nations that stands on the pillars of multilateralism, where each country can have a say on global issues. In this context, my delegation believes that the revitalization of the General Assembly must go hand in hand with the similar exercise in the First Committee, an exercise that can positively impact on the effectiveness of its work. To this end, my delegation fully endorses the NAM’s view on the issue.

It is our sincere hope that the revitalization of the work of the First Committee will take into consideration these views and lead to the improvement of global and strengthening of multilateralism, with enhanced international cooperation towards effective disarmament and greater security and stability in the world.

I thank you.