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STATEMENT

BY

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UN
GENEVA

ON
NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

AT THE
FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 59TH SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 18 OCTOBER 2004
Mr. Chairman,

This year marks the 26th anniversary of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the first devoted to disarmament, when Member States agreed that nuclear weapons posed the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization. The evidence of the danger posed by nuclear weapons was demonstrated by the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 which killed about 160,000 people and at least 50,000 others later from its radioactive effects. The Hiroshima bomb was just twelve and a half kilotons. From just 3 atomic bombs possessed by one State in 1945, the nuclear reality today is that there are over 16,500 nuclear weapons, and more than 36,000 nuclear warheads in the hands of five nuclear powers, excluding other nuclear States. Two new States have acquired nuclear weapon each decade since the end of the World War II. Their total stockpile is about 12,000 megatons of explosion, that is about 12 billion tons of TNT, while the collective yield and destructive capacity of these nuclear weapons equal about 1 million Hiroshima bomb. Studies by experts have revealed that if those nuclear arsenals, or even a fraction thereof, were to be unleashed in warfare, the human civilization as we know it today will be totally annihilated.

This is why nuclear weapons continue to be an issue of grave concern to the international community, including my delegation. For this reason, the need to implement disarmament and non-proliferation measures continues to be a major challenge in the maintenance of international peace and security.

In our general statement last week, we referred to this challenge as one that can only be tackled through the demonstration of necessary political will. This is a vital requirement for the realization of our ultimate objective of achieving nuclear disarmament. It involves readiness on the part of nuclear-weapon States to immediately stop the qualitative improvement, development, production, and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. Once this is assured, the next step should be the commencement of multilateral negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons and on their total elimination. A resolution to this effect should be adopted by this Committee as a proof of our preparedness to match our words with deeds and
embark on a process of negotiating a Convention to ban nuclear weapons. At the same time, it is necessary to stress the importance of ensuring that any nuclear disarmament process is irreversible, transparent, and verifiable in order to be meaningful.

The need to face up to this challenge is in keeping with the resolve at the Millennium Summit as contained in the Millennium Declaration to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular 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 danger.

Pending the total elimination of those weapons, Member States should agree on the establishment of a legally binding international instrument under which the nuclear-weapon States will undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States. Nigeria firmly believes that nuclear non-proliferation can only be meaningfully sustained if non-nuclear weapon States that have renounced the development or possession of nuclear weapons are themselves assured, under legally-binding agreement, against the use or threat of use of such weapons. By transforming the disparate assurances declared by the nuclear powers into a unified, legally-binding obligation, the nuclear powers will not only be fulfilling part of their commitments towards these States but also reinforcing the non-proliferation regime against possible future setbacks.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria wishes to reaffirm its belief in the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as vital instrument in the maintenance of international peace and security. We endorse the 13 practical steps adopted by the 2000 NPT Review Conference for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement the unequivocal commitment undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament to which all States parties are committed under Article VI. The International Court of Justice had reinforced this principle in 1996 in its advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.
In line with the Final Document of the XIII Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Kuala Lumpur from 20 to 25 February last year, Nigeria wishes to reiterate its long-standing position for the total elimination of all nuclear testing. We stress the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), by all nuclear weapon States, which, among others, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. We call upon all States whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the Treaty to do so as soon as possible so that the Treaty can enter into force without further delay. Pending its entry into force, it is important to maintain the moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions.

Nigeria acknowledges the importance of bilateral efforts by the two major nuclear powers in setting in motion the process of reducing strategic offensive nuclear weapons as a positive step towards nuclear disarmament. The delegation, however, shares the view of the vast majority of Member States that reduction in deployments and in operational status cannot substitute for irreversible cuts in, and the total elimination of, nuclear weapons. Of equal significance is the need for these efforts to be as transparent as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria wishes to emphasise the importance of strengthening the existing multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements by ensuring their effective implementation through full compliance with their provisions, as well as the need for their universality. The universalisation of, and full compliance with, these multilateral instruments, particularly those relating to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remain the surest way of guaranteeing that such weapons do not fall into the hands of non-State actors or terrorists as called for by Resolution 1540 (2004) of the Security Council.

The Nigerian delegation recognizes that the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) was a turning point in the history of multilateral efforts to achieve disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament. It is regrettable that the Final Document of SSOD-I had not been implemented twenty-six years after its adoption. The Nigerian delegation wishes to stress the need for convening SSOD-IV in order to give real meaning to nuclear disarmament
process. Consequently, we call upon Member States to adopt a resolution at this session to convene an open-ended working group to prepare for SSOD-IV. It is heartening to note that a draft resolution to this effect has been submitted for the consideration of this Committee.

My delegation expresses its strong belief in strengthening the existing disarmament machinery in order to advance the process of nuclear disarmament. In this connection, we express regret that, for yet another year, the Conference on Disarmament failed both to establish a subsidiary body to deal with the issue of nuclear disarmament and to commence negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons, as agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. As already stated during our General Debate last week, Nigeria reiterates her full support for the A5 proposal as a mechanism for breaking the existing impasse in reaching a work programme for the CD. Nigeria also believes that the FMCT is due for negotiation but for the outcome to be meaningful, it should contain a reliable verification mechanism that should not exclude existing stockpile. It is our hope that the Conference on Disarmament will begin substantive work on these issues as soon as possible.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.