German Delegation to the
First Committee -Fifty-Ninth Session

Statement by
Ambassador Volker Heinsberg
in the Thematic Debate on Nuclear Weapons

New York, 18 October 2004

Mr. Chairman:

In addition to what has been said by the Netherlands EU-Presidency on the issue, Germany would like to make the following observations:

The threats posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons which have become more apparent than ever, have underlined more than ever the need for safeguarding and strengthening the multilateral Treaty system and in this context in particular the NPT. The NPT has established a firm relationship between non-proliferation and disarmament and vice versa. These two goals can only effectively be pursued jointly and not at each others expense. It is particularly important to recall this in view of rising concerns not only regarding continuing proliferation and non-compliance with the non-proliferation obligations but also regarding the slow progress in the field of nuclear disarmament and indications of a "renaissance" of nuclear weapons.

After the end of the Cold War there are new opportunities for nuclear disarmament. These opportunities need to be seized. Germany holds the view that a nuclear weapon free world, i.e. the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, can only be achieved by way of an incremental approach. Such an approach also underlies the 13 practical steps for the systematic and progressive implementation of Art. VI of the NPT adopted by the 2000 NPT Review Conference. These 13 steps remain the performance benchmark for the disarmament process.

A key element in this process is a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). It would strengthen both nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and thus international security.

Germany calls for the immediate start of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of the report of the special coordinator and the mandate contained therein of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally verifiable Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.