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STATEMENT BY

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IN THE GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

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Please check against delivery
Mr Chairman,

1. Please allow me to join other speakers in congratulating you on your election to the Chairmanship of the First Committee, and in extending our appreciation to the former Chairman, H.E. Luis Alfonso De Alba, for his good work during the 59th session of the General Assembly. My delegation would like to express our outrage at the bombings in Bali over the weekend on the night of 1 October 2005, and to extend our deepest condolences to the families of the victims. Singapore condemns this cruel and senseless act. We wish to register our solidarity and sympathy with the government and people of Indonesia, and the countries whose nationals were victims of this barbaric crime.

Mr Chairman,

2. The statements we have heard over the past few days reflect a shared concern over the lack of progress in the areas of international disarmament and non-proliferation. Terms such as “lethargy”, “paralysis” and “overcast atmosphere” have been used to describe the current situation. The Conference on Disarmament did not achieve consensus on the way ahead; the 2005 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty failed to produce any substantive result; and the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty remains far from the grasp of the international community, even after almost 16 years since its adoption. Significantly, perhaps what is most indicative of how little we managed to agree on is the omission of any mention of disarmament and non-proliferation in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document.

3. My delegation is disappointed with the lack of outcomes on these deeply critical issues. As Ambassador De Alba eloquently expressed earlier this week, a valuable opportunity has been lost. This lost opportunity is especially regretful in the context of the urgent security threats that we face today. It is starkly clear that our collective effort in international diplomacy to address disarmament and non-proliferation is in danger of being outpaced: first, by the unrelenting march of science and technology in the creation of more sophisticated and destructive weaponry; secondly, by the extremism of terrorists who would have no qualms devising new and more deadly means to inflict death and devastation amongst innocent civilians. Since the start of
the new millennium, the human tragedies that have occurred in New York, Bali, Riyadh and London testify to the global and indiscriminating reach of terrorism. If terrorists lay hands on nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, the consequences will be devastating.

Mr Chairman,

4. In view of these new and evolving threats, there is great urgency for the international community to act in concert in the field of international peace and security. No country can hope to be spared from these threats, nor can they hope to counter these threats alone without cooperating with the larger community.

5. While we cannot expect to change overnight the somewhat strained international climate, Singapore believes that there are actions we can take now to preserve and build international confidence so as to advance the cause of international disarmament and non-proliferation. First, we need to reaffirm our collective commitment to preserve the sanctity of international agreements. The credibility of international organisations and agreements is a paramount ingredient in creating trust between member states. In this regard, Singapore urges Iran to heed the call of the IAEA Board of Governors to return to the process of dialogue to resolve outstanding matters, within the framework of the resolution adopted by the Board on 24 September 2005.

6. Secondly, we must collectively recognise the need to pursue progress concurrently, on both the fronts of disarmament and non-proliferation. Our approach must evolve from seeing these two as competing priorities, to recognising them as mutually reinforcing thrusts. To echo what H.E. Ambassador Sergio Duarte had said at the 2005 NPT Review Conference, "there is no possibility of success if each group clings to its own narrow perceptions". In this regard, Singapore appeals to all parties to adopt a flexible position to resolve their differences so that real progress can be made.
Mr Chairman,

7. Singapore is highly sensitive to the dangers of proliferation, perhaps more so than other countries given our size, openness, and vulnerability. Nevertheless, the discovery of a sophisticated and clandestine nuclear procurement network in February 2004 is surely reason enough for all of us to enhance international co-operation to counter proliferation. For our part, Singapore has consistently supported multilateral non-proliferation regimes such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Biological Weapons Convention. We believe that these are important instruments in the international effort to fight the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

8. Singapore also supports the full and effective implementation of UNSC resolution 1540 which, inter alia, called on UN Member States to enhance domestic controls and step up cooperation against WMD proliferation. While legally binding multilateralism should be the basis of the global non-proliferation regime, other multi-country initiatives such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) are important elements that fill the gap in our international efforts. I am pleased to note the successful completion of a recent PSI maritime interdiction exercise hosted by Singapore this August, which enjoyed the participation of 13 other countries. I am also pleased to note that Singapore has, in September this year, joined more than 100 countries in being a signatory to the Additional Protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement.

Mr Chairman,

9. The UN has a vital role to play in leading a multi-pronged approach to resolving the suite of security issues that now faces the international community: terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. As the only organisation with a global mandate, the UN is best-equipped to revive international dialogue, rebuild international trust and take effective steps for the furtherance of peace and security in the world.
10. As a member state of the UN committed to the pursuit of international disarmament and non-proliferation, Singapore would like to commend the noble effort that Norway and six other countries have undertaken to help us find the way forward.

11. Finally, my delegation wishes to express our hope and confidence that this committee will be able to work purposefully forward, under your able leadership. We assure you, Mr Chairman, of our fullest cooperation and support. Thank you.