STATEMENT

by

H.E. Philip Sealy

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations on behalf of The Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

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Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are members of the United Nations.

We would wish to indicate how pleased we are to see you chairing this Committee. We would also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and to assure you of CARICOM's active and constructive participation in the deliberations of the First Committee as we tackle collectively at this historic sixteenth session of the General Assembly key outstanding issues in the area of disarmament and international security.

We also wish to thank Mr. Abe, Under Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs for his statement at the beginning of the work of this Committee. We have taken note of the measures which he has proposed and look forward to working with other like-minded delegations to bring about a full realization of the goals and objectives for disarmament and non-proliferation.

CARICOM delegations, Mr. Chairman, which are members of the NAM also align themselves fully with the Statement made by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

It would be recalled that in the United Nations, both the General Assembly and the Security Council have competence in matters of disarmament. According to article 11 (1), of the Charter of the United Nations, the Assembly may consider "the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments, and may make recommendations with regard to such principles to the Members or to the Security Council or to both". Under article 26, the Security Council shall be responsible for formulating with the assistance of the Military Staff Committee referred to in article 47, plans to be submitted to the Members of the United Nations for the establishment of a system for the regulation of armaments.

How well one may ask has the General Assembly which is the most representative organ of the international community fulfilled its Charter mandate in this field of disarmament and arms control over these last sixty years? There is no doubt that we have made some progress over the last sixty years.

In 1959, by General Assembly resolution 1378 (XIV), the General Assembly accepted the goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. Since then we have adopted numerous General Assembly resolutions, requested many reports, held Special Sessions devoted to disarmament and established specialized deliberative and negotiating disarmament machinery.

The General Assembly has also been instrumental in exhorting member States of the international community to become parties to various multilateral treaties such as the Treaty Banning Nuclear weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation
Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the Ottawa Convention on Anti-personnel land mines and the Treaties establishing nuclear weapon free zones. All of these multilaterally agreed disarmament instruments have served to protect humanity from the threat of annihilation as a result of a nuclear war or a more painful and slower death from the effects of chemical or biological warfare.

But, Mr. Chairman, we need to do more, and in fact significantly much more if we are to save the present and succeeding generations from the horrors of a war fought with weapons of mass destruction or from the threat of radiological and nuclear terrorism. In this regard, CARICOM delegations note that the recently adopted International Convention for the suppression of acts of Nuclear Terrorism fills an important lacuna in the corpus of international law that seeks to establish a criminal law regime to deal adequately with acts of terrorism.

We also must do more, Mr. Chairman, to reanimate and recharge the global disarmament leadership with the necessary political will and determination to ensure that our crucial multilateral disarmament machinery, whether it be this First Committee, the Disarmament Commission, the Conference on Disarmament and the NPT and other Review Conferences, is capable of discharging effectively and efficiently their respective mandates and thus overcome the deadlock and impasse in which they find themselves.

CARICOM delegations are, in this regard, disappointed at the failure of the NPT Review Conference held in May of this year to produce tangible and substantive results; and we are equally disappointed at the failure of the High Level Plenary Meeting to address the important global issue of disarmament and international Security in the 2003 World Summit Outcome.

We have spoken enough in these hallowed halls. All that needs to be said has been said. We should now move to the stage of implementation of resolutions adopted by this Committee. We still live in an insecure world and are yet to build a world that is free from fear. According to the Secretary General in his Special Comment in the Fifth Anniversary Issue of the Disarmament Forum publication of 2004, "the need for progress in the field of disarmament is (therefore) as great today as it has ever been". "Indeed", he continued, "given the combination of old and new threats that we face, the world cannot safely endure another half century without major progress on disarmament".

Accordingly, CARICOM delegations are of the view that urgent steps must be taken to rid the world of the tens of thousands of nuclear weapons in existence - a responsibility and international duty of the five declared nuclear weapon States arising under the clear legal obligation contained in article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); that there must be universal adherence to and implementation of the NPT, the CWC, the BTWC and the CTBT to spare us the danger of a nuclear, chemical or biological holocaust by design or accident and to put a halt to the qualitative improvement of weapons of mass destruction; that there must be a drastic reduction in annual spending on arms estimated in 2004 to exceed the astronomical figure of US$1 trillion, while billions of people struggle to survive in abject poverty on less than US$1 per day; that a halt must be put to the maritime transport of radioactive wastes particularly along Caribbean sea lanes which pose an added threat to their already inherent vulnerability to exogenous shocks, and, in addition, an effective liability and compensation regime must be established; and that an end must be put
to the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons which cause so much death and destruction in various conflicts in different regions of the globe and which, in many of our societies fuel high levels of crime and personal insecurity. In this latter respect, CARICOM delegations would have preferred the adoption of a legally binding instrument on marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons which would have served as a good legal basis for cooperation among law enforcement and other authorities in detecting the point of diversion of these arms from the licit to the illicit trade.

All of these objectives can and must be attained through a thoroughly overhauled, revitalized and strengthened UN multilateral disarmament machinery which allows each organ to play its role fully and not be stymied in the discharge of their respective weighty responsibilities by the narrow national self interests of a few. We must seek consensus, but consensus must not be an excuse for inaction. We need new ideas, specific plans and projects, forward looking proposals as well as the necessary flexibility in negotiating positions in order to arrive at desired compromises.

CARICOM stands ready to work with other States and the relevant UN institutions in achieving solutions to all these issues. CARICOM delegations welcome in this regard the efforts of UNILREC in the region and look forward to increased cooperation and assistance in areas pertinent to disarmament and development in the Caribbean.

Let us therefore on this sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the UN re-dedicate ourselves to implementing the Charter mandate given to the General Assembly in the field of disarmament and arms regulation so that we can live in and bequeath to future generations a more peaceful, stable and secure world.

Let us commit ourselves immediately to give new direction and meaning to our work by making maximum use of the Open-ended Working Group charged with making preparations for the holding of SSOD-IV by imbuing that process with a renewed, reinvigorated and dynamic agenda aimed at finding new common ground on disarmament, verification of the disarmament processes, arms control, non-proliferation and related international security matters.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.