United Nations General Assembly

61st Session

First Committee

Nuclear Disarmament

Statement by

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New York, October 10, 2006

Check against delivery
During the general debate several delegations have referred to the so-called "Cooperative threat reduction" initiative and to its relevance as an instrument of arms control and disarmament. In particular the delegations of New Zealand and the United States have informed the First Committee of the efforts made by their countries in this field. In its general statement the Presidency of the European Union has mentioned this argument and has done so on behalf of the 39 countries which have subscribed to that statement.

The delegation of Italy has already illustrated in the past to other disarmament/non-proliferation fora such as the Conference on Disarmament, the NPT Review Conference, as well as in previous General Assembly First Committee meetings, this initiative. In May 2005 the European Union presented to a Plenary meeting of the NPT Review Conference a Working Paper (NPT/Conf 2005/WP37) entitled "European Union Common approach, Co-operative Threat Reduction - Global Partnership Initiative" which is on the record of that Conference. The CTR initiative has been the object of many international seminars, some of which organized by my country.

I wish to recall to the Members of the First Committee what the "Co-operative threat reduction" is about and why it is relevant to WMD disarmament including nuclear disarmament.

The CTR is one of the most significant developments that have taken place in the past few years in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. It involves a growing number of countries. It has been widely debated in the G8 and the EU and has received great attention from disarmament scholars. The CTR initiative was originally developed in the early nineties. It refers to the process of international co-operation and assistance through which a large number of nuclear warheads and carriers have been destroyed or deactivated and WMD materials have been eliminated or placed in safe storage. The CTR is particularly relevant to nuclear disarmament. This is why I make this presentation under this cluster. But it also regards other weapons of mass destruction: chemical, biological and radiological. The implementation of disarmament engagements has brought to the attention of the international community that these engagements, be they multilateral, plurilateral or unilateral- are meaningless unless the weapons involved are either physically destroyed or appropriately disposed of. During the past years the
enormous technical and financial problems connected with the actual elimination of armaments (both conventional and non-conventional) have also come to the surface: the CTR is a multilateral effort aimed at addressing those problems.

The culminating moment of this initiative took place in Kananaskis, Canada, in June 2002, when the leaders of the G8 Group announced a "Global Partnership against the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction". Participants at the Summit pledged to raise up to 20 billion US dollars over the following ten years to address these threats and in particular to "prevent terrorists, or those who harbour them, from acquiring or developing nuclear, chemical, radiological and biological weapons; missile and related materials equipment and technologies". In addition to these important financial pledges, the G8 leaders also agreed on a comprehensive set of non-proliferation principles as well as on guidelines for implementation.

Since 2002, the Global Partnership has become a large-scale international initiative which has contributed to the enhancement of international security and stability. Fourteen States have now joined the Global Partnership. The initiative is open to further expansion to recipient countries, including those from the CIS, and donor countries, which support the Kananaskis documents.

The G8 commitment to the Global Partnership against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was reaffirmed at the G8 2006 summit at Saint-Petersburg.

The Co-operative threat reduction has become one of the important instruments of the European strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The total sum of 1,6 billion Euro was indicated as the global financial engagement of the EU.

The essence of our message is that not only do we have to face the problem of negotiating and implementing disarmament and non-proliferation agreements, we also have to cope with the additional problem of actually destroying those weapons. In some cases this requires an international co-operation, although the primary responsibility of countries for destruction and safety should remains unchanged.