First Committee - General debate  
on all disarmament and international security agenda items

STATEMENT by Ambassador Anda Filip, Permanent Observer of the IPU  
United Nations, 12 October 2009

Mr. President,

Please allow me to begin by congratulating you and your Bureau upon your appointment to lead the work of the First Committee during this 64th session of the General Assembly – I wish you full success in discharging this important function, and would like to assure you of the full support of the IPU throughout the process.

I would like to take this opportunity to refer to issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, from the perspective of the efforts undertaken more recently by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and its member parliaments in this field.

Member States may recall that the 2007 Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations dealt with the issue of the rule of law in international relations, with one of its sessions dedicated to the implementation of key international commitments in the area of disarmament & non-proliferation. That panel was addressed by the UN Deputy High Representative for Disarmament, the Executive Secretary of the CTBTO, the President of the Global Security Initiative, the Chair of the Mexican Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the Chairman of Security Council 1540 Committee, and was followed by a substantive exchange of views among the participating legislators (some 200 from over 70 countries). Much of the discussion focused on the nuclear predicament and the need to mobilize political leadership and a commitment to effectively deal with it – this was an issue, many parliamentarians felt, that simply could not wait much longer.

Based on the outcome of that Annual Hearing, IPU members decided that the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation warranted a more serious examination, including within parliaments themselves, and therefore they introduced the issue on their formal agenda of work. The IPU Committee on Peace & International Security was mandated to look into the issue of Advancing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and securing the entry into force of the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty; the role of parliaments.
production of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. MPs from South Korea referred to their efforts of parliamentary diplomacy, seeking to engage in dialogue with legislators from North Korea.

At the regional level, the Namibian parliament was recently involved in convening a regional workshop for the member states of the Southern African Development Community on the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, and it remains committed to follow-up on these efforts. From Australia, we heard about how there is scope for its parliament to do more, in light of its strong linkages in Asia, to promote non-proliferation and disarmament, both in terms of support for treaties from countries in the region and of norms of nuclear restraint. For example, it was noted that there is particular benefit in Australian parliamentarians becoming more engaged with their counterparts in India on non-proliferation issues.

In terms of specific efforts to ensure the entry into force of the CTBT, we learned about how the collaborative efforts among the parliaments of Costa Rica and Austria, through the CTBTO Preparatory commission and the Article XIV Conference, are in fact contributing to accelerating the ratification process in Latin America and the Caribbean. MPs from the nine Annex 2 states that have not yet ratified the CTBT came forward to address their concerns but also the avenues they are willing to explore. Clearly this is a discussion that needs to continue with renewed energy, and clearly, the value of inter-parliamentary exchange & cooperation cannot be underestimated here.

We believe that for all of the reasons cited by previous speakers in this Committee, the international community has a unique window of opportunity to make real progress towards achieving the ideal of citizens around the globe, that of a nuclear-weapons-free world. We need to seize the moment. We know that parliaments and parliamentarians are a very important part of that solution, and the IPU is committed to play its role in moving this process forward.

I thank you for your attention.