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STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. SUMIO TARUI
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF JAPAN
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT
AT THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 62ND SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
GENERAL DEBATE

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Firstly, allow me to express my congratulations to you, Ambassador Badji, on your assumption of the chair of the First Committee. I am confident that with the benefit of your wealth of diplomatic experience and skill, you will be able to steer us smoothly through this session's deliberations. I assure you of my delegation's full support as you carry out this vital task.

Mr. Chairman,

After some disappointing years, the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, it seems, has finally come into bud. In 2005 and 2006, no substantive consensus document was achieved, especially at three major multilateral conferences: the Seventh Nuclear-Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, the World Summit, and the UN Conference to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action (PoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). However, the tide seems to have changed in favor of disarmament and non-proliferation.

In December last year, the Sixth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) concluded successfully. We agreed in its Final Document on a number of substantial issues, including the inter-sessional activities and the establishment of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU).

The momentum developed in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) last year was carried through and further intensified during this year's session. This year the CD came close to reaching consensus on its programme of work, tabled as document L.1, which would initiate negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), as well as deepen discussions on the other core agenda items. The CD must quickly adopt its programme of work and start negotiations on an FMCT once it reconvenes in 2008, in order to regain its original mandate as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.

In May the first Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, chaired by Mr. Yukiya Amano, Ambassador of Japan to the International Organizations in Vienna, successfully completed its work despite some delay over the adoption of the agenda and in the commencement of substantive debates. What made the meeting a success was that discussions took place in a considerably improved atmosphere bearing in mind the acrimony that surrounded the 2005 NPT Review Conference. The second Preparatory Committee is scheduled for April next year in Geneva and we hope the States Parties can utilize the improved conditions that followed the first Preparatory Committee to make further substantial progress towards a productive 2010 Review Conference.

The establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts Meeting on an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) next year has been agreed to. The uncontrolled spread of conventional arms is causing many victims in conflicts. An ATT can ensure the responsible transfer of conventional weapons, and prevent and stop the occurrence of victims caused by illicit conventional weapons. The international community should sincerely address and eventually resolve these intractable problems by establishing an effective ATT. As an original co-sponsor country of the resolution for an ATT, Japan was heartened by the enthusiastic response of the UN Member States and the record number of governments that submitted their views to the UN Secretary General on an ATT. We hope that an effective treaty can be established through constructive discussions at the GGE and the participation of as many countries as possible in the ATT process. Japan intends to do its utmost to keep up the momentum of discussions on an ATT.

Mr. Chairman,

Overall, we can fairly state that the international community at present has better prospects for the future of disarmament and non-proliferation. Nonetheless, we must not be complacent. The international community is still beset by a number of serious challenges that require our focused attention. As the Foreign Minister of Japan, Mr. Koumura, stated in his general debate on 28 September, the United Nations needs to transform itself from “forum” to “actor.” The First Committee should sustain this current favorable tide and actively address the challenges we face.

One of the most significant challenges for humankind is the total elimination of nuclear weapon, but this has not yet been realized. Some estimates indicate there are 27,000 nuclear weapons in existence on the earth. That number needs to be drastically reduced, together with the further de-alerting of such weapons. Moreover, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has yet to enter into force. We must redouble our efforts for its early entry-into-force. The nuclear test proclaimed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 9 October last year highlighted the urgent need for this.

As the only country in the world that has suffered nuclear devastation, Japan reiterates its determination to reinforce international efforts for nuclear disarmament, and to this end, we will once again submit a draft resolution that maps out concrete measures towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, such as those I just mentioned. We will also submit a draft resolution on SALW together with Columbia and South Africa.

In the area of conventional weapons, there is the outstanding issue of cluster munitions. Japan is fully aware of the humanitarian concerns caused by cluster munitions. The international community should address the problem effectively by striking a balance between humanitarian concerns and security requirements, and involving the major producers and possessors. Based on this view, Japan supports the commencement of negotiations within the framework of the CCW.

The proliferation risks of weapons of mass destruction – nuclear, biological and chemical – and their means of delivery are considerable. The Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol need to be universalized and strictly complied with. States are obliged to establish and strengthen export controls in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1540. In addition, the Proliferation

Security Initiative (PSI) has become an important tool for deterring the illicit transfer of WMD-related materials and technology.

Regional nuclear proliferation risks are still grave and unresolved. Japan expresses deep concern regarding the nuclear test proclaimed by the DPRK on 9 October last year. While welcoming the recent progress achieved by the Six-Party Talks, we strongly urge the DPRK to comply promptly with the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1718, and appeal to all the UN Member States to fully implement its provisions. We will continue to actively work towards a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issues within the framework of the Six-Party Talks. We urge the DPRK to take concrete actions according to the recently adopted “Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement” and move steadily toward the full implementation of the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005. As for Iran’s nuclear issues, Japan hopes that Iran will sincerely cooperate with the IAEA in order to resolve the “outstanding issues”. Also, Iran has to make further efforts to restore the confidence of the international community by responding sincerely to the requirements set forth by the relevant IAEA Board and UN Security Council resolutions without further delay.

The ever-increasing demand for nuclear energy due to global warming and global energy security has required us to address both the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the prevention of proliferation. One way to meet both requirements is to assure nuclear fuel supply. A number of proposals, including Japan’s own, have been presented and the IAEA Director General submitted a report based on these proposals in June this year. Japan will continue to take an active part in and looks forward to substantive discussions at the IAEA.

Here I would like to restate the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation education, which will allow the international community to proactively cope with these challenges from the grass-roots level. Japan encourages the UN Member States to implement the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General on the UN study on disarmament and non-proliferation education, and to share information at this First Committee on efforts they have been undertaking to this end.

Mr. Chairman,

The First Committee, tasked with deliberating on disarmament and related international security questions, needs to tackle all these challenges with a sense of urgency. We thus urge the UN Member States to fully utilize these proceedings by

holding deep deliberations on resolving the issues and challenges confronting the international community and adopting action-oriented resolutions. Additionally, I would like to point out that all these pressing issues need to be grappled with hand in hand with civil society, who has played a significant role in disarmament and non-proliferation. Japan sincerely hopes that the current positive trend will be maintained in this Committee and beyond.

Thank you.