STATEMENT BY
CHAIRMAN MATIA MULUMBA SEMAKULA KIWANUKA
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It is with humility and anticipation that I officially commence my work as Chairman of this distinguished Committee. The international security challenges on our agenda are both wide and deep -- wide, in encompassing issues of global scope, and deep, in touching upon matters that affect human security at its very roots. Last year, the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters warned in its annual report of a “crisis of multilateral disarmament diplomacy.”¹ Let us show in our deliberations a new commitment to rekindle the spirit of multilateralism that is so vitally needed to address global threats. This may be our greatest challenge of all -- one we must not fail to overcome.

As has become customary, the Committee will consider some resolutions that echo others adopted at earlier sessions of the General Assembly -- these are what former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld once termed, the “hardy perennials” of our deliberative process. Our goals must be to continue the process of strengthening global norms to eliminate the deadliest weapons the world has ever known, promoting controls over other weapons that threaten international peace and security, and exploring measures to advance conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Yet we will also be considering several new issues -- including some that are not yet fully covered by any formal treaty obligations, or in some cases not covered at all -- such as missiles, small arms and light weapons, information security, and the weaponization of outer space. We are, in short, exploring ways to build and strengthen the architecture of international peace and

security as we are simultaneously seeking to reinforce the foundation upon this edifice must rest.
In performing these roles, let us recognize the need to adapt the various ways and means of
disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control to changing times -- but let us also reaffirm our
collective support for fixed principles and agreed global norms that have served the interests of
all Member States well over the years.

According to an old proverb from my country, "However far a stream flows, it never
forgets its source." The ultimate source of our work in the field of disarmament is of course the
United Nations Charter, which provides in Article 11 that the General Assembly "may consider
the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security,
including the principles governing disarmament and the regulation and armaments, and may
make recommendations with regard to such principles to the Members or to the Security Council
or to both." Other sources include our past deliberations, and mandates and other expectations
inspired by deliberations at international conferences and within multilateral treaty regimes.

Many of the most fundamental principles that continue to serve as the building blocks of
the rule of law for disarmament appear in the final document of the First Special Session on
Disarmament, which found that "Enduring international peace and security cannot be built on the
accumulation of weaponry by military alliances nor be sustained by a precarious balance of
deterrence or doctrines of strategic superiority." The fundamental truth in this particular
provision was tragically reaffirmed by the terrorist acts of 11 September 2001 -- acts that
occurred despite enormous disparities in the forces available to the attacking group relative to
those of the world's last remaining superpower.
In the aftermath of those shockingly brutal events, observers throughout the world community have increasingly turned to the question -- why? -- not in an effort to justify the attacks, but to understand their occurrence and thereby to reduce the chances similar events will happen once again. While the 1987 Report of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development did not fully anticipate the extent that terrorism would evolve into a top security priority for the world community, it did nevertheless displayed great wisdom both in highlighting the importance of addressing the underlying roots of conflict and in cautioning against weapons and the use of force as appropriate or effective ways to resolve such conflicts. The Report stressed that “The world can either continue to pursue the arms race with characteristic vigour or move consciously and with deliberate speed towards a more stable and balanced social and economic development within a more sustainable international economic and political order; it cannot do both.”

Given the recent trend of rising military expenditures and the more chronic problems of human poverty and underdevelopment, how far have we progressed since this 1987 report cited the existence of “a growing recognition that both overarmament and underdevelopment constitute threats to international peace and security”? Indeed, much of the agenda of this Committee has for decades been shaped by the world's longstanding difficulties in solving these closely-related problems. Now more than ever, we can see just how far a distance there remains to travel down the stream of disarmament -- to a world without any weapons of mass destruction, and world where other weapons are limited to that which is necessary to implement international obligations, and to maintain borders and domestic security. In our deliberations over the weeks ahead, we would all be well advised not just to recall the source of our stream, but also its destination.
We should also consider the route along the way -- namely, our own deliberative process. We should both read and heed the Secretary-General’s recent report on United Nations reform, in particular those parts calling for a reduction in the number of reports that the Secretariat has to produce, reducing also the number of meetings, and improving cooperation with individuals and groups in civil society. Let us ensure that the First Committee is making its own effort to continue the reform process in a manner that enhances international peace and security in the most efficient and effective manner. I intend to consult with the bureau in an effort to identify possible options the Committee might consider to eliminate reporting requirements that are no longer necessary -- perhaps through the adoption of sunset provisions -- and to tighten the focus of the Committee’s resolutions, while limiting their number. Just as the Secretary-General has highlighted the advantages of results-based management, let us also demonstrate our commitment to results-based disarmament by ensuring that our resolutions are susceptible to regular progress assessments.

Another of the Secretary-General’s key messages in his reform report was that the United Nations must keep its focus on “doing what matters” -- in particular, adhering to the priorities defined by the United Nations Millenium Declaration and the various global conferences of the past decade. Since the General Assembly adopted its first resolution in January 1946, the United Nations has had as one of its top priorities the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and this must remain a top priority -- the Millennium Declaration reaffirmed this goal by stressing the importance of implementing disarmament treaties. It is therefore fitting that nuclear weapons -- the deadliest of such weaponry -- should continue to receive the utmost attention of this Committee, both as it welcomes positive developments and as it points the way to further progress. We should pay no less attention to the problems of compliance with the global norm of disarmament as we do the global norm of non-proliferation -- for both are
interdependent challenges and addressing them together in this Committee is indeed "doing what matters."

This collective effort will also require focused attention on the unfinished agenda of eliminating chemical and biological weapons. Our goal must here be to encourage universal membership in the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions and compliance with all of their terms, in particular the requirements for the verified destruction of weapons stockpiles and the prohibition on assisting in the acquisition of such weapons.

With respect to conventional weapons, the international Small Arms Conference of July 1991 made substantial progress in establishing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons as a major international priority. In accordance with the Programme of Action adopted by that Conference, countries around the world are now involved in adjusting their laws and policies to reflect a new determination to combat this difficult problem. The longer this problem goes unsolved, the more it will serve as an obstacle to further progress in disarmament, development, human rights, humanitarian relief, and many other areas. Though small arms have not yet become a focus for multilaterally-binding legal commitments, such global norms are strengthening each year with respect to another deadly conventional weapon -- anti-personnel landmines. In both these areas, national efforts, regional initiatives, and global norms together have enormous potential to alleviate real threats to human security, particularly those that threaten the lives of millions each year in developing countries.

My distinguished predecessor as Chairman, Ambassador André Erdös, closed his introductory statement last year by saying that "what is at stake here and now, in Conference room 4 at United Nations Headquarters in the fall of 2001, is nothing less than the survival and
security existence of our human species." My only amendment to that conclusion today would be to change the date to 2002, for the stakes have if anything grown over the last year.

We must continue our efforts to discover new, more effective ways of encouraging states to resolve their disputes without the use or threat or use of force. We must persist in seeking to drive down the number of weapons of mass destruction and to strengthen controls over the remaining stockpiles and related materials until their total elimination. We must clearly do more to encourage a reduction in military spending, while increasing the world’s attention to the deeper social and economic roots of security threats. We must also recognize the need for additional efforts to ensure that future generations have the kind of education and training that will enable them to make wise decisions on the critical issues that come to this Committee. We must strengthen the international rule of law as it applies to disarmament and arms regulation, by working for universal adherence to agreed global norms, and by codifying new laws as needed to address emerging threats to international peace and security arising as a result of new technological developments.

Finally, we must accomplish all of the above working in a cooperative spirit -- for ultimately, mutual respect and multilateral cooperation are indispensable in the search for global solutions to the global security problems on our agenda. Together, let us now show the world what multilateralism can do.