STATEMENT BY

H.E. AMBASSADOR HASMY AGAM
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT
THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

OF THE 57TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK

MONDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2002

(Please check against delivery)
Mr. Chairman,

I join others in congratulating you on your election as the Chairman of the First Committee as well as to the members of your bureau on their election. I am confident that that given your vast experience and expertise, you will be able to steer the deliberation of this Committee to a successful conclusion.

2. My delegation’s appreciation also goes to your predecessor, Ambassador Andre Erdos of Hungary for the outstanding manner in which he had guided the work of this Committee during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

3. The distinguished Representative of Myanmar will be making a statement, later, on behalf of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), to which my delegation fully associates itself, but I would like to take this opportunity to make some brief remarks on issues of particular interest to Malaysia.

Mr. Chairman,

4. My delegation views with concern the lack of real progress in nuclear disarmament over the past year. The situation is made more alarming by the changed international climate, characterised by the steady erosion of the multilateral process during the same period. This negative development in the international security situation is acknowledged by the Secretary-General himself who, in his report to the General Assembly, cited that little cooperation in the field of disarmament was achieved this past year. Thousands of nuclear weapons continue to be stockpiled in the arsenals of the nuclear powers, while progress in the negotiations on nuclear disarmament remains negligible. It is important that we should not be lulled into complacency just because the Cold War is over; the threat of nuclear war between nuclear-armed States in our contemporary world has not disappeared. Indeed, in some situations and in the context of emerging security doctrines, the risks of armed conflict involving nuclear weapons may even have increased. Therefore, every effort should be made by the international community not to lower its vigilance and to press ahead towards achieving the ultimate goal of the elimination of these horrendous weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Chairman,

5. In April 2002, the First Preparatory Committee Meeting for the 2005 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference was held. My delegation wishes to congratulate Ambassador Hendrik Salander of Sweden for the effective manner he had conducted the work of that Meeting. The Meeting was held against the backdrop of the formulation of a new Nuclear Posture Review by a nuclear weapon State, which expands the role of nuclear weapons beyond their essentially deterrent function, with grave implications to international peace and security. This Nuclear Posture Review is perceived by many as a clear rejection of the 13 steps agreed upon by the nuclear weapon States at the 2000 NPT Review Conference on nuclear disarmament. Malaysia is very much disappointed and dismayed at these
developments and urges all nuclear weapon States Parties to the Treaty not to renege on their undertakings made two years ago, as that would deal a serious blow to the viability of the Treaty and to the disarmament process in general. My delegation hopes that serious efforts will be made to give substance to these undertakings as we begin to prepare for next NPT prep-com in Geneva and the Review Conference in 2005. In the current volatile political climate, it is imperative that we strive for the Treaty's continued viability. This can only be ensured through concrete outcomes of the review process premised on fulfillment by states parties of all of their Treaty commitments. Any dithering from these commitments would further undermine the NPT.

6. The NPT has been universally accepted as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime but, regrettably, its universality continues to remain elusive. We continue to believe in the importance and criticality of the universality of the Treaty. Malaysia therefore warmly welcomes the announcement by Cuba to accede to the Treaty and to ratify the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. This important decision by Cuba, in spite of the current negative trends on the disarmament scene, reflects the positive and constructive orientation of the Government of Cuba on the nuclear disarmament issue. It is a clear affirmation by a non-Treaty State of its belief in the viability of the NPT and its continued relevance as a non-proliferation regime. We earnestly hope that the Cuban decision and final action to accede to the NPT would strongly encourage the three remaining non-Treaty states to re-examine their position and to contribute towards the early realization of the universality of the Treaty.

Mr. Chairman,

7. Malaysia is encouraged by the continued positive response by countries to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We hope that this positive trend would solidify the norms against nuclear proliferation and further development of nuclear weapons. Malaysia would strongly urge the 13 remaining countries, as stipulated in Article XIV of the CTBT, to respond to the appeal by the Secretary-General to accede and ratify the Treaty so as to effect its entry into force as soon as possible.

8. While Malaysia is gratified at its membership of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), we are disappointed and disheartened with the continuing impasse in the Conference. Its continued deadlock would undermine further whatever credibility the CD may have as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. We would strongly urge the President of the Conference and the three special coordinators, designated by the CD, to make every effort to break the impasse and move the negotiations forward. In the context of our times, there is a need to manifest renewed faith in the multilateral disarmament process, as represented by the CD, by a more determined effort to begin to address the critical issues on its agenda.
Mr. Chairman,

9. Last year, we witnessed a serious challenge to the validity and viability of multilateral disarmament diplomacy. The international community has yet to fully recover from the shock following the demise of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), in the wake of the withdrawal of the United States from that Treaty. The Moscow Treaty signed between the United States and Russia, following the abrogation of the ABM, will not be able to replace the ABM Treaty because while it was viewed as a step towards reducing the deployment of strategic nuclear weapons, it did not address the issue of irreversibility and verification of nuclear disarmament. My delegation is of the view that abrogation of the ABM Treaty would have grave consequences for the future progress in arms control and non-proliferation efforts and inevitably the future of international security.

10. We are also dismayed at the suspension of the Fifth Biological Weapons (BWC) Review Conference last November. This was another disappointing setback in the multilateral disarmament process in the last few years. We hope that the "cooling off period" would enable States Parties to the Convention to continue their important work towards reaching an agreement on a Final Declaration to strengthen the BWC.

Mr. Chairman,

11. My delegation welcomes the tenth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We continue to support international efforts to promote transparency and confidence-building measures among States. The danger posed by conventional weapons has become even more acute with the advent of new and highly sophisticated technologies in the conventional weapons industry. It is most disheartening to observe that in a number of armed conflicts in the developing world, including in Africa, highly sophisticated and expensive conventional weapons have been used in spite of their crushing poverty. The adoption of a Programme of Action at the end of the 2001 UN Conference on “Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects” is a significant step towards achieving the goal of preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It is our fervent hope that States would fulfill their respective obligations under the Programme of Action. My delegation believes that the issue of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons must be viewed from a holistic perspective of arms control and disarmament, post-conflict peace building, conflict prevention and socio-economic development.

12. My delegations wishes to reiterate its strong commitment to the purposes and intent of the Ottawa Convention. Malaysia has completed the destruction of its small stockpile of anti-personnel landmines and, therefore, has promptly fulfilled its obligations under Article 4 of the Ottawa Convention. We are also committed to the attainment of a truly universal ban of anti-personnel landmines. It remains our hope and expectation that there will a stronger political push for universal acceptance of this Treaty. In this regard, we welcome the successful conclusion of the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties held in Geneva recently.
Mr. Chairman,

13. Malaysia views the establishment of nuclear weapon free zones as an integral part in the quest to free the world from nuclear weapons as well as to promote regional peace and stability. Having worked tirelessly with its ASEAN partners for the establishment of the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty, Malaysia looks forward to continuing direct consultations between ASEAN and nuclear weapons States in the first half of 2003 with a view to encouraging the nuclear weapon States to accede to the SEANWFZ Protocol. My delegation also attaches great importance to the promotion of such zones and strongly supports their establishment in other parts of the world, particularly in West Asia or the Middle East, as called for in the resolution on the Middle East, adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference and reconfirmed in the 2000 Review Conference. The establishment of such a zone in the region is particularly pertinent in the context of the prevailing volatile political and security environment there. We would also strongly encourage the establishment of such a zone in South Asia, which, perilous situation, the U.N. Secretary-General himself has identified, in his recent address to the 57th session of the UN General Assembly, as one of the “four current threats to world peace”.

Mr. Chairman,

14. The historic decision of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legality of the threat and use of nuclear weapons, of July 1996, remains an important milestone in the global campaign for nuclear disarmament. We regret that the important Opinion of the World Court continues to be ignored by the nuclear-weapons States. Malaysia and other like-minded countries will continue to pursue follow-up actions to the Advisory Opinion of the Court at this and future sessions of the General Assembly. We hope that, as in previous years, the draft resolution will continue to enjoy wide support from member states of this Organization.

15. Finally, Mr. Chairman, my delegation wishes to pay the highest tribute to the Department of Disarmament Affairs, under the able and effective leadership of Under-Secretary General Jayantha Dhanapala, for the important work carried out by the department in promoting the disarmament agenda of the United Nations. We also strongly support the appeal by the Secretary-General to rededicate ourselves to multilateral approaches to disarmament. In spite of—indeed, because of the recent and current setbacks in the multilateral disarmament process, the multilateral search for genuine measures for disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons must remain high on the global disarmament agenda. The Department of Disarmament Affairs has an important role to play in this effort. In conclusion, Malaysia would urge the international community to support and respond positively to the call by the Secretary-General during the Millennium Summit for the convening of an international conference to consider all aspects of the nuclear weapons issue.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.