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STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER

BEFORE

FIRST COMMITTEE OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY GENERAL DEBATE ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES

NEW YORK
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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation, like others, who have preceded me in this debate, wishes to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this Committee and the other members of the Bureau on their election.

We also take the opportunity to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Erdos of Hungary, who demonstrated excellent stewardship, as he chaired the Committee’s proceedings at a juncture when global peace and security was breached by the terrorist attacks in the United States. As President Kufuor noted in his address to the General Assembly on 13th September, “the attack was an affront to civilization itself; and throughout the ages wherever humanity has found itself confronted with danger, it is the sense of unity and common purpose that has pulled us through”.

Mr. Chairman, your own earlier statement and that of the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, struck the same chord of mankind’s commonality. Thus multilateralism which ensures our common vision, purpose and security in this global village should remain the basis for framing the norms on disarmament. It therefore should be rekindled if we are to confront our global threats, especially terrorism in all its manifestations. As the USG Dhanapala emphasized, everyone is a stakeholder in the process of disarmament, namely, rich nations, poor nations, developed nations, developing nations, big nations, and small nations. Our effectiveness as nations in dealing with threats to international peace and security lies in forging and sustaining the existing multilateral platform on which to reevaluate our efforts.

Yet, Mr. Chairman, our disarmament machinery continues to grind even more slowly, with its linch-pin, the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, once again, having failed to agree on a work programme for commencing negotiations on a Missile Material Cut-off Treaty.

Overcoming the CD’s paralysis will be necessary to quicken the momentum of negotiations, and require flexibility and compromise on the part of the Nuclear Weapon Countries. It will also have a salutary impact on on-going efforts for the universalization of important treaties such as the NPT, BWC and CWC. In this uncertain environment, my delegation perceives the final session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) opportune not only in challenging the international community to consider new ways and means to achieve
disarmament, but also examine new measures on confidence-
building for restoring much needed trust in negotiations. Cuba's
decision to accede to the NPT, and also sign the Tlatelolco Treaty,
must therefore be welcomed as a breathe of fresh air that inspires
all of us, especially those Member States who still remain outside
the multilateral framework.

Equally so, Mr. Chairman, the USG's proposal for the
establishment of an International Commission on Weapons of mass
destruction deserves careful and sober consideration. Its projected
objective of examination of problems related to the production,
stockpiling, proliferation and terrorist use of such weapons as well
as their delivery means by a panel of experts from many Member
States, under the joint leadership of the North/South chairpersons,
would help bring to the fore for consideration latent issues that
have stalled progress in this area.

Mr. Chairman,

We continue to uphold the conclusions of the 2000 NPT
Review Conference as relevant to the process of multilateralism in
disarmament and urge the Nuclear Weapon Countries to
demonstrate commitment to the 13 practical steps for the
systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI of the
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

My delegation also considers the establishment of Nuclear-
weapon-free Zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at
among the States of the region concerned, as stepping stones in the
process of achieving nuclear disarmament in a manner that
promotes international stability. We therefore reaffirm our support
for the treaties of Pelindaba, Rarotonga and Tlateloloco, and
welcome the endeavours of the five Central Asian States to conclude
similar arrangements in their region.

Mr. Chairman,

The menace posed by small arms and light weapons, to the
many developing countries is a matter of deep concern. The easy
availability of SALWs to non-state actors, often procured with the
connivance of state actors, has contributed to this phenomenon.
West Africa, which has experienced difficulties, now faces new
threats to its stability with the new conflict in Cote d'Ivoire, as its
delegation presented in its statement last week.
Here again, Mr. Chairman, permit me to quote excerpts from President Kufuor’s General Assembly statement: “for a cleansed and proper development of the Global Village, certain initiatives must be commended and encouraged. Ghana is in full support of the UN’s effort to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We urge the Member States to join in the early implementation of the Programme of Action that was adopted in 2001 to stop the trade”.

The Secretary-General’s report No. P/57/160 of 2 July, 2002 was equally emphatic on this issue as it concluded that “it is the collective responsibility of States, international and regional organizations, and civil society bodies to cooperate to implement the Programme of Action”. Ghana looks forward to joining other delegations at next year’s biennial review of the Programme to assess follow up activities at national and sub-regional levels underway in that direction.

Mr. Chairman, at a period of increasing military expenditure and its impact on economic development, the debate about the relationship between disarmament and development stands to benefit immensely by the proposal of the Secretary-General for the establishment of a group of governmental experts to undertake a reappraisal of this issue. We welcome this proposal and hope that it would garner the support to ensure its establishment.

In conclusion, I wish to observe that all of us are sailing in this global-ship, albeit in different classes. Yet the vagaries of the weather and the sea waves which buffet the ship’s movement affect us all, irrespective of class. Our common destiny compels us to cooperate on various disarmament issues more than anything else, to ensure our common survival.

Finally, my delegation commends the Department of Disarmament Affairs on its role in shaping the UN agenda on the issue.