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STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY U MYA THAN

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR

TO THE UNITED NATIONS, GENEVA

IN THE

GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

57TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the pleasure of extending the warmest congratulations of the Myanmar delegation on your unanimous election as the Chairman of the First Committee of the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. I pledge you the fullest cooperation of my delegation on the advancement of the work of the committee under your able leadership.

Our tribute also goes to the other members of the Bureau. We also pay our tribute to His Excellency Mr. Andre Erdos of Hungary for his important contributions to the work of the First Committee at the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

We are delighted to welcome to our midst the representatives of Switzerland and Timor-Leste who have just joined the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

This session of the First Committee is taking place against the background of the disturbing trends and the growing urgency and importance of arms control and disarmament.

This is a difficult time, not conducive to arms control and disarmament. New strategic doctrines for pre-emptive strike and first use of nuclear weapons, unilateralism, lack of political will and lack of vision for promoting common security for all states have negative effects, and eroded multilateralism in the field of arms control and disarmament. However, the current negative picture of arms control and disarmament does not mean that the importance of arms control or disarmament is declining. On the contrary, the urgency and importance of arm control and disarmament is greater than ever before in the past. Risks of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are growing, possible attacks with
weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, have now become a clear and present danger in the world today. Such threats are emanating not only from state actors but also from non-state actors like extremist terrorists. The tasks that lies before us are daunting and difficult.

Mr. Chairman,

In the overall dark picture of arms control and disarmament, there are a few gleams of light. One area of positive developments is the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones. We firmly believe that the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones, based on arrangements freely arrived at by the countries in the regions concerned is an effective measure of geographical limitation of nuclear proliferation, and contributes to nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. It also contributes to the strengthening of regional security and to the maintenance of international peace and stability. Accordingly, we welcome the recent agreement at the expert level among Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on the text of the treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The Central Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone will be the fifth nuclear-weapon-free zone in the populated areas of the world and the first such zone in the northern hemisphere. This landmark achievement, when it materializes, will constitute a significant contribution to the cause of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

We should also like to express our deep appreciation and support for the consolidation of the nuclear-free status of Mongolia and for P5’s Joint Statement providing security assurances to it.

We attach great importance to the universality of the membership of the NPT. We, therefore, welcome the recent decision of Cuba to accede to
the NPT. This will constitute a significant step towards achieving our cherished goal of the universal membership of the NPT.

We take note with appreciation the signing of the US-Russia Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (Moscow Treaty) as a significant step towards reducing their deployed strategic nuclear weapons, provided that these reductions be implemented according to the benchmarks of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency.

Mr. Chairman,

While attaching great importance to the questions of WMD, we do not underestimate the problem of small arms and light weapons, which are actually killing every year an estimated half a million people and maiming many more people around the world. The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York from 9 to 20 July 2001, had adopted a programme of action (PoA). We hope that the Biennial meeting next year will be able to generate the much-needed momentum with the follow-up work on PoA.

We should like to express our preference for the convening of the Biennial Meeting in New York in July 2003 in order to enable the broadest possible participation of the Member States in the Biennial Meeting.

We note with satisfaction that the Organization for Prohibiting Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has resolved its difficulties, and is now conducting its activities with renewed momentum under the leadership of the new Director-General Mr. Rogelio Pfrirter. We hope that the OPCW will be able to further advance the implementation of the CWC and to further promote cooperation among the Member States and Signatory States.
We, however, note with regret that the Fifth BWC Review Conference, held in Geneva in September 2002, adjourned without any concrete results. We hope that the reconvened BWC Review Conference in November this year will be able to reach agreement on the substantive follow-up work and on the strengthening of the BWC regime.

Mr. Chairman,

The horrendous terrorist attack on 11 September 2001 has burnt an indelible mark in our memory. Moral revulsion and psychological shocks, generated by this tragic event, are still with us. The incident of 11 September marked a watershed in many ways. It also has tremendous impacts on arms control and disarmament.

We can and should draw many lessons from the incident of 11 September 2001. One lesson that stands out from this incident is that terrorism is a global problem, requiring a global response. Multilateralism is one of the imperatives of the world today. Nuclear deterrence does not work against such threats. Security threats today are different from those of the twentieth century. Security problems today have nuclear as well as non-nuclear dimensions. Terrorism is a multi-faceted problem, requiring a multi-faceted response. In this context, we in Myanmar oppose terrorism in all its manifestations, and we are doing our utmost to combat this horrendous scourge.

Mr. Chairman,

In this era of globalization, there is hardly any international issue that can be resolved by a single nation. Global problems require global actions. As such, multilateralism is an imperative in the world today. Nowhere is this imperative more manifest than in the field of arms control and disarmament. We, therefore, welcome and fully support a new NAM
resolution, entitled "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation". It is a timely and relevant draft resolution, addressing a pressing current issue of the day.

Mr. Chairman,

Talking about multilateralism, we are disappointed by the continuing impasse in the Conference on Disarmament (CD). This single multilateral negotiating forum dealing with disarmament has been paralyzed for the past four years. We urge all Member States, particularly nuclear weapon states, to show maximum flexibility in order that the CD may overcome the current impasse, agree on a programme of work and start its substantive work at the beginning of its 2003 session.

On 8 July 1996, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), in its advisory opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, reaffirms by the unanimous decision of all Judges of the Court that there exist an obligation for all states to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. Since then, a decent interval of over six years has elapsed. As a matter of fact, considering that the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in 1994 to seek an advisory opinion of the ICJ on this question, more than a decade would have elapsed by the time the 2005 NPT Review Conference is held. We should now ask a very pertinent question as to whether the obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament, i.e. the total elimination of nuclear weapons, has been fulfilled. The answer to this question will certainly be in the negative. It is, therefore, incumbent on all States Parties to ensure that practical steps to implement that obligation be speeded up in order to achieve our shared goal of nuclear disarmament.
Mr. Chairman,

Since the dawn of the nuclear age nearly six decades ago, the nuclear Damocles' sword has been hanging on the mankind. Today, with the introduction of new strategic doctrines and policies that contemplates the actual use of nuclear weapons, this sword has become more threatening as a clear and present danger. The threat of use of nuclear weapons, which has been ever present as a remote and tenuous possibility since the advent of these weapons, has now come to the forefront. This threat is now staring us into our eyes. The proper function of nuclear weapons is to prevent nuclear war, but not to fight one. For these reasons, we urge that, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, all states must refrain from the use of nuclear weapons in settling their disputes in international relations. Pending the achievement of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the most reasonable course of action or policy is to agree on an undertaking of no first use of nuclear weapons and non-use and non-threat or use of these weapons against non-nuclear states.

Mr. Chairman,

We all are firmly committed to nuclear disarmament as the States Parties to the NPT. There is, indeed, in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference the “unequivocal undertaking” by the nuclear weapon states to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament. The will to fulfill this “unequivocal undertaking” needs to be demonstrated by the full implementation of the “13 practical steps”. Progressive and systematic steps to dismantle and eliminate nuclear weapons, irreversibility of nuclear reduction and disarmament measures, further reductions of the operational status of nuclear weapons, diminishing the role of nuclear weapons, accountability and verifiability—all these must be an integral part of such a nuclear disarmament process.
We firmly believe that the NPT is the cornerstone of the regime of nuclear non-proliferation. The First PrepCom Meeting for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, held in New York in April 2002, had made a fairly good start. It is essential that we have a good follow-up at the Second PrepCom Meeting to be held in Geneva next April. We should spare no efforts to ensure that the 2005 NPT Review Conference be a success and produce concrete results in terms of the implementation of the commitments of the State Parties at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and at the 2000 NPT Review Conference as well as the optimum utilization of the strengthened review process.

Mr. Chairman,

The ASEAN countries have successfully established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South East Asia. However, the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty is yet to be acceded to by the nuclear weapon states. For the South East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) to be fully operational and effective, it is essential that the nuclear weapon states accede to the Protocol at the earliest possible date. We welcome the announcement by China of its readiness to accede to the Protocol. We reiterate our call to the other nuclear weapon states to accede to the Protocol as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

We should also like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for the commendable job it has been doing in promoting regional dialogue on regional and international disarmament issues. We believe that the activities of the Regional Centre should be further expanded and enhanced, and that the Centre should be provided with necessary resources to carry out its activities effectively.
Mr. Chairman,

In 1978, the First Session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSODI), in paragraph 45 of its Final Document, clearly sets forth that priority in disarmament negotiations shall be nuclear weapons. In the year 2000, the United Nations Millennium Assembly, in paragraph 9 of its Millennium Declaration, resolves to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. In 2002, the priority accorded to nuclear disarmament is now even more relevant in the light of the recent developments. For these reasons, although other disarmament questions also have their legitimate claims on the attention of the international community, it is the view of my delegation that nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority on the arms control and disarmament agenda.

Reflecting the priority and importance accorded to this subject by the international community, my delegation will be tabling its traditional draft resolution on “Nuclear disarmament” with the broader support of co-sponsors. We will join hands with all the like-minded Member States and the civil society in our international endeavours for nuclear disarmament.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.