Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT

BY

H.E. MR. LAZAROUS KAPAMBWE
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE
OF
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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. Chairman,  

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as Chairman of this committee, a compliment that I also extend to the other members of the bureau. Furthermore, my delegation joins others in congratulating Ambassador Sergio Duarte on his appointment as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and commend him for his inspiring remarks addressed to the Committee in the opening ceremony on Monday, 8 October 2007.  

Zambia fully associates itself with the statements by the distinguished Representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria, who spoke on behalf of the Non-aligned Movement and the African Group respectively.  

Mr. Chairman,  

There is no doubt that the existence of weapons of mass destruction poses the greatest danger to the survival of humanity. Our commitment to the achievement of general and complete disarmament, under the framework of the United Nations, is therefore a commitment to the preservation of life.
That is why Zambia fully supports Resolution 61/62 that calls upon all Member States to renew and fulfill their individual and collective commitment to multilateral cooperation as an important means of pursuing and achieving the common objectives in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. As called for in this Resolution, States Parties to relevant instruments on weapons of mass destruction should consult and cooperate among themselves in resolving their concerns with regard to non-compliance, in accordance with the procedures defined in those instruments.

Mr. Chairman,

This Committee is meeting at a challenging time when the catalogue of unaccomplished tasks in our efforts to achieve complete and general disarmament, is very long. It is clear that urgent steps need to be taken to achieve the goals we set for ourselves. The concern of my delegation is not so much that we have not concluded effective international instruments to bring about general and complete disarmament. Apart from such landmark instruments like the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Pelindaba and Treaty of Tlatelolco and others, the UN General Assembly passes numerous
resolutions every year on the various aspects of disarmament. In our case, the saying does not hold true, that "The devil is in the details." Our devil clearly lies in non-implementation and non-compliance.

Take the Non-Proliferation Treaty for instance. Four decades ago when it was signed there were only five nuclear weapon states. Today the nuclear club is larger and many countries are on the threshold of joining. Whereas four decades ago the two nuclear blocs held each other in check on the use of nuclear weapons through what they called mutually assured destruction (MAD), today no one knows where or who can ignite a nuclear conflagration because these weapons are so widely available.

The world of four decades ago was not safe, living as we did, under the threat of a confrontation between the two nuclear blocs. But it was a world where we knew who had the nuclear weapons and could hold them responsible for the use or misuse of those weapons. Back then, only States had nuclear weapons. Today faceless, nameless non-state actors are in possession of these weapons of mass destruction, largely because of non-compliance and non-implementation of the commitments that States undertook under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
Mr. Chairman,

With regard to small arms and light weapons (SALW), while they are small in nature, their uncontrolled access by non-States actors is a serious threat to the stability of nations. My delegation, therefore, urges the international community to implement the Programme of Action for SALW that was adopted by the General Assembly in 2001.

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that some of these issues, as well as taking stock of the state of world peace and security, can best be addressed within the framework of the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament. We, therefore, strongly call for the convening of the said Special Session as a matter of urgency.

I note that most of those who have been calling for the convening of SSD4 are the non-nuclear weapon states, small states, like my own country. An impression may be created that we are calling for SSD4 and disarmament because, after all, we have nothing to lose. Or, perhaps, that we are calling for disarmament because we fear that, if it came to a confrontation with our nuclear weapon brethren, we could be defeated. Nothing can be further from the
truth. We call for SSD4 and for the proscription of weapons of mass destruction because all of us, the have and the have nots, are threatened by these weapons. In the event of use of these weapons there will be no survivors.

Sometimes we just wish that our brothers and sisters, the big and powerful countries, can stop and listen to the voices of the small, to the voices of wisdom. In my language, Mr. Chairman, there is a saying: that more often than not, wisdom moves from an anthill into the mountain. It is this wisdom that made us sign the NPT and forgo the option of acquiring weapons of mass destruction: it is not because we are incapable of acquiring them.

Thank you.