INTRODUCTION

Allow me, first of all, to express my gratitude to Ambassador Sergio Duarte, High Representative of UN Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for inviting me to participate in this thematic debate. After so many years, I am so glad to be here again in the midst of the First Committee session, which reminds me of my previous involvement and personal interest on the issue of disarmament.

Let me start by saying that we are now entering an entirely new phase of the nuclear dilemma that demands entirely new ways of thinking about nuclear weapons and security. It is time for all of us to wake up to today’s reality that not only does the proliferation of nuclear weapons constitute a grave threat to international peace and security, but the continued existence of nuclear weapons also poses a similar threat.

As long as nuclear weapons remain, there is a risk that they will one day be used, be it by design or accident. With the estimated 27,000 nuclear weapons in the custody of a number of states. They merit worldwide concern.

The questions on how to reduce the threat and the number of existing nuclear weapons must be addressed with no less vigour than the question of the threat from additional weapons, whether in the hands of existing NWS, proliferating states or terrorists.

The goal of nuclear disarmament has long eluded the international community, and the expectation of progress towards that goal has not been fulfilled. In the context of NPT implementation, there is a widely shared perception that the nuclear-weapon-states have attempted to evade from implementing the legal obligations and commitments under Article VI of the NPT. Agreements reached in 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences were seen as being abandoned.

Despite the end of the Cold War, the past decade has seen more setbacks than successes. For instance, in September 2005, the UN World Summit was unable to agree on a single recommendation on disarmament and non-proliferation. At
the 2005 NPT Review Conference, the objective of nuclear disarmament was repudiated or contended rendering it to become irrelevant. Even worse, one nuclear-weapon-state had clearly stated that “nuclear disarmament no longer exists”.

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND THE NPT

Thirty five years after the NPT came into force and 15 years after the Cold War ended, the non-nuclear-weapon-states (NNWS) generally share the view that the NWS disregard their obligations and commitments, and instead, are retaining their arsenals indefinitely or even developing new type of nuclear weapons.

The NPT has enjoined NNWS to refrain from the acquisition of nuclear weapons. The proliferation of nuclear weapons has been effectively contained as nearly all NNWS have fulfilled their commitments by renouncing the nuclear option.

Hence, adhering to both ends of the central bargain under the NPT, namely, non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, is critical for the survival of the NPT. And it would be unfair and untenable to demand the NNWS to comply with their obligations, while the NWS have failed to live up to their obligations and commitments.

Just as the non-proliferation objectives are backed by stringent enforcement and verification measures, the Treaty’s disarmament commitments should be backed similarly. A failure to deal with this issue through the creation of extra NPT mechanisms runs a risk of the NPT regime becoming irrelevant and ultimately leading to its collapse.

Since the last NPT review cycle, the debates have focused more on non-proliferation pillar of the NPT. From Libya to Iraq, from DPRK to Iran, from AQ Khan to resolution 1540, and from the Proliferation of Security Initiative (PSI) to the Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI). They are issues that mostly relate to non-proliferation concerns. But none of these steps is adequate to eliminate the nuclear danger. As long as nuclear weapons continue to exist, the threat posed by such weapons will remain.

Some states have made clear that the most Article VI problems today lie with the threat of emerging nuclear arsenals in some present or former NPT non-nuclear weapon states. Even worse, some obviously have stated that the effort to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons is simply a utopian dream.

But it is clear to many, if not all, that nuclear disarmament is possible and achievable. If nuclear disarmament is viewed merely as a utopian dream, Article VI, which has been diligently crafted and thoroughly negotiated, does not have any meaning at all.
It is the concern of majority of the States parties of the NPT that NWS are still obliged with those obligations and commitments, which they agreed to in the 2000 NPT Review Conference (Revcon). If NWS are of the view that those undertakings are only historical commitments, we are afraid that other previous commitments, for example Decision 3 of the 1995 NPTREC on the indefinite extension of the NPT, may also become irrelevant.

Therefore, we remain deeply concerned by the lack of progress towards achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons despite some reports of bilateral and unilateral reductions. We are also concerned by the continued existence and deployment of thousands of such weapons. In general, we witness that progress towards nuclear disarmament has slowed down and is distanced from its ultimate objective. The followings are some facts that support such an argument:

- Nuclear weapons in their thousands are retained, many on alert status along with the attendant risk of accidental or unauthorized use, which undeniably constitute a frightening possibility;

- The unilateral declaration of national security interests based on re-legitimization of nuclear weapons in the security strategies/doctrines of some nuclear-weapon-states will create another nuclear arms race and nuclear deterrence;

- There has been systematic attempts to de-link non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, which the 2000 Final Document held as “mutually reinforcing” with an exclusive focus on the former, thereby exacerbating discrimination and unsustainable double standards;

- The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which was opened for signature and ratification in 1996 has not yet entered into force. The longer it is delayed, the more likely that testing will resume and it will become a major setback in the efforts to constrain the qualitative improvement of weapons and the development of new types of weapons.

- The resumption of negotiations on a fissile materials cut-off treaty (FMCT) is yet to get off the ground although it constitutes the next vital step in the multilateral disarmament agenda. Its conclusion has been frustrated by the imposition of untenable pre-conditions relating to verification.

- The 2002 Moscow Treaty contains no commitment either to destroy or to render unusable weapons that are no longer operationally deployed. Unfortunately, reductions in deployment and in operational status can not substitute for irreversible cuts in, and the total elimination of nuclear weapons;
The abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty) has led to negative implications for the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defense systems, and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of deployment in outer space;

The question of non-strategic nuclear weapons continues to be of concern due to their portability and ability to station them in close proximity to areas of conflict, which make them susceptible for use in combat, the high probability of pre-delegation of authority to use in the event of conflict, and of an early, pre-emptive, unauthorized or accidental use;

At the end, those regrettable facts have led to the inevitable conclusion by many policy-makers and analysts of broken promises relating to the reduction and elimination of nuclear armaments.

CURRENT SITUATION

In recent years, NWS have been sending mixed signals about their nuclear disarmament commitment. Unlike in the 2000 Revcon, it seems no coordination among NWS was made. We have seen that they were not able to issue a joint statement at the last NPT Revcon.

We are all aware that the Preamble of the NPT clearly sets out two conditions for the realization of nuclear disarmament: (i) easing international tension and (ii) strengthening of trust by States parties. During the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the two conditions set out by the NPT Preamble indeed exist.

Firstly, following the end of the Cold War, where there was no longer an ideological competition and the nuclear deterrence had no place in that context, we were very optimistic at the time that international tension was reduced and eased, particularly between the two rival blocs. Secondly, there was a conducive atmosphere that created confidence and trust among the NWS in which they managed to issue a Joint Statement and finally agreed with the 13 practical steps.

What we have seen since 2000 instead? If my reading of different sources is correct, some NWS instead of eliminating their nuclear arsenals, are modernizing, advancing and developing new type of nuclear weapons. Just as an illustration, this can be seen from the on-going U.S Reliable Replacement Warheads (RRW) through “Complex 2030” program, and the recent decision by the U.K to modernize its Trident nuclear submarines for 2050.

It is true that thousands of nuclear weapons have been retired and dismantled in the US and Russia, through bilateral strategic agreement such as START I and START II. But START I will expire in 2009 and START II has not been ratified. The reductions under the Moscow Treaty are not irreversible, verifiable and
transparent. Perhaps it is timely now that the IAEA may be called upon and be involved to verify nuclear arms control agreements, such as the Moscow Treaty.

Therefore, we urge NWS, in particular the US and Russia, as they did during the negotiation to established the NPT, to exercise leadership and commit to further negotiations on strategic nuclear weapons. Such negotiations could result toward the replacement of START I. It may also lead to an incremental approach to non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe.

We may not likely reach consensus on an action plan for nuclear disarmament at the next NPT review cycle, but we should not retreat from our past commitments. At least, we must reaffirm our common nuclear disarmament goals, examine how to achieve them, and agree to resume progress on further specific measures to halt and reverse the nuclear arms race. For this ideal course, the upcoming 2010 NPT Review Conference sets a good opportunity.

**WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?**

Nuclear weapons must never again be used, by states or by terrorists. For this goal it must be outlawed. The international’s efforts to get rid of them before someone, somewhere is tempted to use them, can be made complementary to outlaw them.

In our view, nuclear disarmament is possible and realistic. It can be achieved through careful, sensible and practical measures. But to achieve this, a leadership role by NWS is called for and their intensive coordinated work is required. Concertedly the international community can turn the goal of a world without nuclear weapons into a joint effort.

In 1996, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its landmark advisory opinion agreed unanimously: “There exist an obligation 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”.

It is time now to move from the present stalemate and revive the discussion and negotiations about what kind of measures or concrete steps that can be undertaken. From our part and other NNWS, we have submitted a number of proposals toward the achievement of nuclear disarmament.

In many disarmament forums, we have reiterated our call for a full implementation of the unequivocal undertaking given by the NWS at the 2000 NPT Revcon to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament. That undertaking should be demonstrated without delay through an accelerated process of negotiations and the full implementation of the 13 practical steps to advance systematically and progressively towards a
nuclear-weapon-free world as agreed to by all States parties, including NWS, at the 2000 Review Conference.

In addition to that, the Article VI Forum, participated by about 30 countries and sponsored by the Middle Power Initiative (MPI), had identified priority issues for achieving nuclear disarmament, among others: (i) entry into force of the CTBT; (ii) immediate negotiations on an FMCT; (iii) de-alerting of US and Russia nuclear forces; (iv) strengthening systems for the verified and irreversible to the Moscow Treaty; (v) strengthening and extending nuclear-weapon-free-zones; (vi) declaring ‘no-first use policy’, and (vii) concluding ‘Nuclear Weapons Convention’.

Underlying the crisis relating to nuclear disarmament was the paralysis in multilateral disarmament machinery that was consciously built for almost three decades. This has been reflected by the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), divisiveness in the First Committee and criticism on United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC).

For the last few years, the debate in the field of disarmament has focused on process rather than substance and many so-called decisions simply reflect the lowest common denominator of widely different opinions.

For example, the CD has remain dead-locked for ten years on its programme of work. The current cycle of UNDC has not reached substantive progress on its two agenda items. And the last 2005 NPT Revcon failed because it wiggled with the issues of agenda and the programme of work during most of the time allocated to its substantive sessions.

Therefore, multilateralism should become the basis for the dialogue between nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon-states. With so much of our disarmament machinery deadlocked to the point of paralysis, an increasing number of States, particularly from the NAM, are considering the notion of returning to the Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSOD) or a World Summit on Disarmament as recommended by the WMD Commission.

The only consensus document that we have is the Final Document adopted by SSOD-I in 1978, which inter-alia, has clearly stated: “nuclear disarmament and the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction remains the highest priority and the principal task of our time”.

Through SSOD-IV, we could address not only the whole agenda of disarmament, but also the dealing with the real reform of the disarmament machinery comprehensively and avoid a piecemeal approach in this regard. Unfortunately, no consensus was reached on “the objective and agenda”, including on the possible establishment of the preparatory committee, at the last substantive session of Open-ended Working Group on SSOD-IV this year.
CONCLUSION

The continued existence of nuclear weapons constitutes a threat to all humanity and their use would have catastrophic consequences for human beings. Hence, there is a compelling need to take appropriate steps towards the priority objective of the total elimination of such weapons. Yet, this objective of permanently abolishing these horrific weapons requires the political will of all NWS.

The NPT constitutes an essential legal instrument for nuclear disarmament and its Article VI remains valid. It is an integral part of the NPT bargain and should not to be treated as a peripheral issue by the NWS. The consensus political agreements of 1995 and 2000 must be implemented in an incremental, transparent and non-discriminatory manner. The NWS must address the disarmament issues more directly than they have in the past. Most critically, the issue of nuclear disarmament must be taken more seriously.

While the world is watching the process of UN Reform, we must continue to explore possibilities for advancing the dialogue on disarmament and non-proliferation, so that the groundwork will be ready when the real action begins. In accordance with the UN Charter, the First Committee, particularly, has a central role and primary responsibility in promoting and pursuing all disarmament measures, including nuclear disarmament.

Thank you.