Statement
by the Member of the Delegation of the Russian Federation
Mr. Eugeny P. Buzhinsky in the First Committee of the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly

New York, October 18, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear disarmament is one of the most important elements necessary for strengthening international security and strategic stability. The last fifteen years saw a dramatic reduction in nuclear weapons. Thus, starting from 1991 there was a fivefold reduction in the Russian nuclear arsenal, and a reduction by seventy five percent of the total stockpiles of non-strategic nuclear weapons.

The Moscow Treaty on the Strategic Offensive Reduction is being implemented. According to this Treaty Russia will have much less nuclear charges in 2012 than it has today.

The need to continue nuclear arms reductions further is often voiced at the United Nations. We stand for a gradual solution of this problem in accordance with NPT Article VI. Based on the above, we conduct a dialogue with the United States regarding a new arrangement to replace the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty which, in our view, must be legally binding. The essence of our approach on this issue is to ensure the succession of the process of strategic nuclear arms reduction and limitation, and, to this end, preserve what is useful and effective in the START regime.
The Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles remains in force and continues to be important for maintaining strategic stability. At the same time, it is hardly acceptable that while Russia and the United States have eliminated this class of missiles, other states start to develop such actively. We call on all countries, primarily those with missile capabilities, to consider jointly the transformation of this Treaty into a universal arrangement open to broad international accession.

At the same time it should be noted that from the experience of implementing the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty we know that reducing strategic offensive arms is a complicated, labor-time- and resource-consuming process.

President Putin has repeatedly expressed our country’s willingness to reduce our nuclear arsenal to a much lower level that would fit into the notion of minimum sufficiency that has been much talked about recently. This could certainly be carried out only under conditions of sustained strategic stability.

At the same time, nuclear disarmament calls for taking into account the link between strategic offensive and defensive missile armaments. Implementing unilateral plans of creating a global anti-ballistic missile defense matched with the idea of a global nuclear or conventional flash strike would upset the balance of forces and undermine strategic stability. We are convinced that the implementation of such military programs that provide for the deployment elements of the global US ABM system in Europe will have negative consequences for the maintenance of strategic stability.

In order to avoid the Cold War “action-counteraction” scenario Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed an alternative that provides for collective interaction: to analyze potential missile threats for the period until 2020, and consider the establishment of a system for monitoring the strategic situation.

I would like to stress the fact that Russian nuclear weapons are kept under reliable control. Enhanced effectiveness of this control is achieved through organizational and technical measures. In particular, since 1991 the number of nuclear weapons storage facilities has been cut down by four. All non-strategic nuclear weapons had been moved to central storage facilities of the Russian Ministry of Defense. All these measures have made it possible to relocate financial resources to ensure safety and reliable protection of the reduced number of nuclear munitions storage facilities using state-of-the-art technical means of security and physical protection.
Russia has developed and introduced a set of measures to counter terrorist actions, which envisages regular comprehensive checks of all facilities that pose nuclear and radiation risks in terms of security and readiness to prevent terrorist actions.

March 2007 saw the completion of exercise initiated by the Russian Federation and subsequently carried out in Russia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States intended to demonstrate to many countries of the world what the real situation in securing storage and transportation of nuclear weapons is. These exercises confirmed high readiness of emergency units for immediate action in case of unforeseen nuclear weapons incidents.

There are a couple of additional important points I would like to make. We attach particular importance to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ben Treaty. The Russian Federation ratified the CTBT back in 2000. We are pursuing a principled course towards ensuring the earliest possible entry into force of the Treaty. It is one of the most important instruments in the area of non-proliferation and limitation of nuclear weapons.

We are deeply concerned by the situation with the CTBT’s entry into force. To date, not all countries whose ratification is required for its entry into force have ratified it.

We are aware that today additional measures are required to strengthen the security assurances provided to non-nuclear States. We do not object to the elaboration of a global arrangement on providing assurances to the non-nuclear States that would exclude the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, with the consideration of the exceptional cases, provided for in the military doctrines of the nuclear powers when such weapons can be used.

We consider that the non-proliferation regime should be strengthened through enhancing the IAEA verification activities as well as ensuring the universal character of the Protocol Additional to the Agreement for the Application of Safeguards with the Agency. We call on all the States that have not yet ratified the Additional Protocol to do so as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman.
It should be noted as well, that our steps toward nuclear disarmament are accompanied by relevant structural changes in the Russian Federation’s nuclear weapons sector.

We have reduced by one half our production capacity that is excessive for defensive purposes. The Russian Federation is working toward shutting down industrial uranium-graphite reactors for the weapon-grade plutonium production. The material produced by those facilities is not used for military purposes. Moreover, the production of uranium in Russia for manufacturing nuclear weapons was terminated long ago.

We attach particular importance to the launching of disposition by Russia and the United States respectively of 34 tons of weapon-grade plutonium that is no longer required for defensive purposes. This would ensure the start of the process of irreversible transformation of excessive amounts of weapon-grade plutonium into forms unusable for manufacturing nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman

While we note the progress made in the nuclear disarmament and, accordingly, in the fulfillment of the obligations under Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Russian side believes that complete elimination of nuclear weapons can only be achieved through a gradual phased movement towards the ultimate goal on the basis of a comprehensive approach and with the participation of all nuclear powers and, certainly, in conditions of sustained strategic stability.