General Debate of the First Committee

4 October 2010

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament
Mr. Chairman,

I would like to commend you for your election to preside over the work of this First Committee. Rest assured of my support and that of my delegation in discharging your duties over the next 4 weeks.

I also salute Ambassador Sergio Duarte for his opening remarks and for the work he has been undertaking as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Through him, I address my words of appreciation for the whole Secretariat and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. Chairman,

No priority is higher than nuclear disarmament. Nuclear weapons remain the sole anthropogenic factor that can instantly destroy humanity and change irreversibly the Earth.

As the Brazilian Minister of External Relations, Celso Amorim, stated last July at the Conference on Disarmament, "nuclear weapons have no role in the more peaceful, democratic and prosperous world we all want to build. We need not only undiminished, but indeed increased security for all, especially for countries that do not possess and do not aspire to possess nuclear weapons. (...) The Non-Nuclear Weapon States have been delivering their part of the deal. We now look forward to continued political will and to more expeditious steps to fulfill the nuclear disarmament commitments enshrined in Article VI of the [Non-Proliferation] Treaty. There is where the "compliance deficit" lies."

It is understandable why the vows for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons coming from the main nuclear weapon powers were received with widespread joy and renewed hope. It is still too soon to evaluate the progress in the accomplishment of those vows.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty still awaits for indispensable ratifications in order to enter into force. There are however positive attitudes from the part of key States.

A new bilateral treaty has been concluded by the two major nuclear powers. It still has to go through internal legal measures in order to enter into force. It represents an important confirmation of the will to go ahead on the path of disarmament. It is nevertheless a bilateral instrument based on the idea of equivalence of arsenals and of mutual security. In other words, the treaty's fundament is the persistent need of nuclear weapons to ensure security.

The same reasoning is behind policies of other nuclear weapon States whose unilateral measures for arms limitation do not forsake what they call "a credible
deterrent". Another nuclear weapon State, while paying tribute to the ideal of disarmament, has not disclosed any specific measure. Other nuclear weapons possessors do not hide their efforts to increase their arsenals.

The picture is bleak. For that reason, this General Assembly should not take a panglossian view of the matter.

Fortunately, a relative success was achieved in the Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, last May. The implementation of the Plan of Action then adopted will be a test to evaluate the real possibilities for progress on nuclear disarmament.

Nevertheless, a more stringent timeline for nuclear disarmament is still essential. It is rather disappointing that the final document of the NPT Conference refers only to a "sense of urgency".

The New Agenda Coalition is presenting a draft resolution entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free-world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments". The unanimous support to this proposal would certainly point in the direction of attaining the goal of increased security for all.

The Delegations of New Zealand and Brazil will also be presenting their draft resolution on Nuclear-weapon-free Southern Hemisphere and Adjacent Areas, which we hope will count with the same outstanding support it has received in previous sessions in this First Committee.

OTHER WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Mr. Chairman,

The implementation of the Convention banning chemical weapons, one of the off-springs of the Conference on Disarmament, proceeds. Important decisions lie ahead in order to face difficulties for the fulfillment of deadlines. The relative success of the Convention shows the advantages of a well negotiated and precise text.

These qualities are not found in the Convention banning biological weapons. It remains uncertain if the BWC would pass the test of an actual attack. The Review Conference scheduled for 2012 will have to face the many uncertainties that surround the implementation of the Convention. For the moment the discussions held in the framework of the Convention remain very much within the limits of threat awareness, exchange of impressions and good intentions on cooperation.
CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

Mr. Chairman,

Conventional weapons may not threaten the survival of humanity but at every minute they make new victims. Many efforts have been undertaken and it is not easy to measure their positive results. It is easy to count deaths but not survivals.

One such example is the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its five Protocols. Their implementation, including through periodic reports by States party, has been steadily monitored by annual meetings of experts and Conferences of the Parties. As in any other instrument, efforts must continue to be deployed for the universalisation of the CCW and its Protocols.

The progress on banning anti-personnel landmines under the Ottawa Convention has been constant. Much remains to be done in terms of demining, destruction of stocks, universalisation and other aspects. In any case the reduction of the problem is undoubtedly a success story.

The case of cluster munitions is considerably different. There was at first reluctance to negotiate a legal instrument in the natural context of the CCW. It appeared to several States, among other reasons, that the problem was already covered by Protocol V on explosive remnants of war. This situation led to the negotiation outside the CCW of a Convention signed in Oslo. A number of States, among them those possessing the largest arsenals of these weapons, preferred to pursue the treatment of the matter within the UN framework. It is feasible to conclude another legal instrument that, being compatible with the Oslo Convention, would be supported by states outside the Convention and also by its States party. As a result, the international community would count with the best coverage of the problem of cluster munitions. It is to be expected that this new instrument, under the form of a sixth Protocol of the CCW, could be concluded next year.

The Program of Action on small arms and light weapons will complete ten years in 2011. It is essential to persevere upon the work done during the past years so that a solid technical, legal and political basis can lead to palpable results. The illicit traffic of these weapons, cause of uncountable deaths and of political instability, became a definite subject in the international agenda and States are morally and politically bound to contribute to the solution of the problem.

The beginning of the preparation for the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, on the basis of Resolution 64/48, was another positive step for the control of the ominous results of the unregulated trade of conventional weapons.
DISARMAMENT MACHINERY

Mr. Chairman,

The initiative of the Secretary General to organize a high level meeting on "revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations" corresponds to a widespread wish to discuss the UN machinery established in 1978. The inclusion of a specific item on the subject in the Agenda of the General Assembly will allow an ample exchange of views and possibly the adoption of measures that only the General Assembly can take.

At the core of the question is the elimination of nuclear weapons. A number of instruments are conducive to that goal as it is the case of the CTBT. The question of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices as well as the security assurances to be given to non-nuclear weapon States are useful goals but they cannot replace the actual negotiation of a convention to prohibit nuclear weapons within a clear timeframe.

As Brazil said in the recent High Level Meeting, "getting the CD back to substantive work means addressing the root causes of inaction in multilateral disarmament negotiations. (...) To place the blame on the rule of consensus is a fallacy. The difficulties that confront the CD do not stem from its rules of procedure, nor from its consensus rule. In the past, those same rules did not prevent us from agreeing to launch negotiations, even when certain substantive differences remained".

Different States oppose dealing with different aspects of fissile material the same way some States refuse the idea of legally binding security assurances. If the ideal of a world free of nuclear weapons is real, a process of bona fide negotiations will lead to consensus.

OUTER SPACE AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Chairman,

More and more the I Committee will have to deal with questions related to high technology in the context of international security, especially regarding outer space and information and telecommunications systems. In the first case, there is a clear need for legally-binding commitments aimed at forbidding the placement of weapons in outer space, the destruction or damage of satellites from ground-based platforms; or the use of orbital objects to damage or destroy satellites. In the second case, it is clear that the interests of the whole international community rely on preserving the security of global information and telecommunications systems. The development of cooperative measures and the consideration of international agreements aimed at strengthening security in this field should be pursued.