STATEMENT

by

MR. REMONGAR DENNIS
Deputy Permanent representative of Liberia to the United Nations

Before the First Committee
of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

General Debate

New York 10 October, 2011
Mr. Chairman,

Let me add my voice to the previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as the Chair of the First Committee of the 66th Session of UNGA. Your election is indicative of the enormous faith in your ability to guide our deliberations in the right direction. I also wish to congratulate members of your bureau on their election and wish them the best as we begin deliberations.

Liberia associates itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Statement by the African Group read by the Representative of Nigeria.

Liberia submits that multilateralism is a sine qua non for achieving most of our goals in the disarmament process, and the United Nations is the appropriate forum to address all issues of disarmament and arms control. In this regard, the First Committee plays an essential role, being the component of the General Assembly which has the responsibility to review Disarmament and related issues affecting international peace and security.

Nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority of all disarmament goals, including all the related issues of nuclear non-proliferation in all aspects. We believe, as expressed in the Statement of the African Group, that the ultimate aim of the disarmament process is general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. This process also upholds the principle of undiminished and enhanced security for all States.

The NPT is an important cornerstone for disarmament process. Liberia as a part of this global community encourages all states to adhere to the principle and idea of NPT in all its aspects including the establishment of Nuclear Weapons Free Zones across all the regions of the world.

Liberia reaffirms that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) remains the sole competent authority responsible for verifying and assuring compliance by States Parties with their safeguards agreements undertaken in fulfillment of their Treaty obligations. We call on all Member States to adhere to the safeguard mechanisms of the IAEA and its protocols.

We commend the Secretary General for convening the High-Level meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security, on 22 September 2011. This laudable effort by him would no doubt help to promote the highest international standards of nuclear safety and security and to put the issue, which concerns all of us, on the front-burner of negotiations.

Mr. Chairman,

We re-affirm that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. We see the current impasse in the CD as unhelpful to the overall principle of multilateral disarmament negotiations and call on the CD to agree, by consensus, on a balanced and comprehensive program of work.
Liberia hails the entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty on 15 July 2009 and calls on all States that have not yet ratified the Treaty to do so without further delay. In particular, we call on Nuclear Weapons States to do this so as to ensure its effectiveness.

Mr. Chairman,

As a country that has witnessed the true meaning of mayhem as a result of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons, we consider these so-called “small arms” as our very weapons of mass destruction. In view of this, countries of the West African sub-region are cooperating in the frame work of ECOWAS to address the issue of the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Liberia still grapples with some of these challenges, but we speak as a nation that has known real but unnecessary war. This, Mr. Chairman, is what happens when the world fails to contain the illicit arms sale, including those of small arms and light weapons, which continue to destroy thousands of human lives.

Notwithstanding these challenges, we remain undaunted and vigilant about illegal transshipment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in our region. We believe that the only way to curtail this is to strengthen collective efforts to tackle the menace. It is for this reason that we commend New Zealand for the pivotal role played to address the key elements of the PoA through a robust exercise during the Meeting of Governmental Experts in May 2011.

My delegation is committed to actively support Nigeria as the Chair-designate of the 2012 Review Conference. We believe that the year 2012 holds enormous promise with both the Preparatory Committee and the Review Conference of the PoA.

Mr. Chairman,

Finally, we wish to reiterate our support for the on-going negotiations on an Arms Trade Treaty. My delegation is committed to the process in its entirety, having critically assessed its benefits. We believe it is time to halt the unwarranted suffering and the destabilizing effects of the illicit transfer of arms on the socio-economic well-being and stability of all regions.

I thank you.