STATEMENT

BY

H.E. MR. MOTLATSI RAMAFOLE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO TO THE UNITED NATIONS

IN THE

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

DURING THE SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

06 OCTOBER 2011
NEW YORK

Please check against delivery
Mr. Chairman

Thank you for giving me the floor. I congratulate you for assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee. I also congratulate Members of the Bureau on their election. I assure you of my delegation’s full support.

I align myself with the statements delivered by the Distinguished Permanent Representatives of Nigeria and of Egypt on behalf of the African Group, and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

The world looks up to the United Nations (UN) to fulfill its mandate of the maintenance of international peace and security, and removal of the threats to peace. It is essentially through the First Committee, as an all inclusive forum for the UN Member States, that the UN may fulfill that mandate. However, progress in the work of this Committee is beset by various setbacks. The Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) do not enjoy universal support of the UN Member States. The deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), and in the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) persists. Agreement is yet to be reached on the text of the text of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Challenges in the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (POA) abound.
Mr. Chairman,

The first resolution on disarmament that was adopted by the General Assembly (GA) in 1946, called for “the total elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction”. This resolution, and similar ones that followed it, were reinforced by the adoption of the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in 1968. Despite the fact that the NPT became a legally binding commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in 1970, nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction still remain with us. If anything, the number of Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) has steadily increased, and the world is in more danger than ever before.

Mr. Chairman,

Some NWS justify the retention of nuclear weapons in large stockpiles, as deterrence. The end result of this strategy has been the upsurge in the number of Countries that are today pursuing nuclear weapons programme. The reason is simply that possession of nuclear weapons breeds a climate of mistrust, and, therefore, encourages others to seek to acquire them. It also increases perceptions that nuclear weapons are retained, not as a path towards disarmament, but, as a mere cover-up for their indefinite retention.

Indeed, the mere existence of nuclear weapons presents a possibility of the accidental or intentional use of these weapons. More so, because some of them remain in high alert. Our aim to eradicate these weapons must be vigorously pursued. We must continue to espouse the multilateral approach to disarmament in order to achieve this purpose. We urge the NWS to have renewed political will
to fulfill their commitments for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation under the NPT. In the same breadth, we call on the States that are not party to the NPT, to ratify and/or accede to the Treaty without any further delay.

Mr. Chairman,

The adoption by consensus of the Outcome Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, was a great success in the field of disarmament. We need to build on that momentum as we prepare for the next Review Conference. The 64 Point Action Plan agreed on by the 2010 Review Conference must be fully implemented by all State Parties. Lesotho stands ready to play its part in the implementation of the said Action Plan.

Mr. Chairman,

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is of paramount importance for achieving a nuclear weapons free world. The CTBT’s preamble clearly states that the Treaty’s objective is to contribute effectively to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. Yet, more than fifteen (15) years after it was first opened for signature, this Treaty has not entered into force. The need for the acceleration of the CTBT ratification must be our common goal. It is in this regard, that we appeal to all States, in particular the Annex II States, to urgently consider ratifying the CTBT, so that it may enter into force soonest.

Mr. Chairman,

The Conference on Disarmament (DC) has been unable to make progress on the nuclear disarmament issues on its agenda for the past 15 years. This paralysis is inexcusable, particularly because the modernization of nuclear weapons is on the
rise. Consequently, we call on Members of the CD to urgently implement their Programme of Work, in order to take the disarmament negotiations forward. We should commend the UN Secretary General for his tireless efforts to give impetus to the work of the CD. Lesotho fully supports all efforts aimed at revitalizing political will in the CD.

Equally frustrating is the progress in the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). During its past Session in April this year, and for the 12th year running, the Commission was not able to come up with any recommendations on any of the three topics on its agenda. There is a need for all Member States to strengthen their resolve to make progress in the Commission during the next circle of this Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

Conventional weapons continue to pose a serious danger to international peace and security. However, we believe that the efforts to adequately address their proliferation will soon be a reality. The progress made in the Preparatory Committee Meetings for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) has laid a solid basis for the Treaty’s formal negotiations at the July 2012 ATT Conference. At that Conference, our goal should be to come up with a robust and legally binding Treaty that will set the international norms and standards for the transfer, and sale of all conventional weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

It would be remiss of me not to talk about Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). These weapons continue to bring untold suffering to people in the developing countries, Lesotho included. Their widespread prevalence impedes
the global efforts to reduce gun violence. The 2011 UN Secretary General Report on Small Arms pertinently observes that the inadequate control and regulation of these weapons in many countries, make it easy for SALW to be diverted into the illegal market and be used to commit many crimes. To that extent, we submit that prevention of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons should be at the forefront of all our efforts. Lesotho, and other Member States struggling with the problem of curbing these weapons, require urgent assistance in the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (POA). Furthermore, we should not loose the opportunity that will be presented by the 2012 review to come up with specific recommendations that will enhance the effectiveness of the POA.

**Mr. Chairman,**

I conclude by pointing out that the First Committee is a forum that should be utilized to reach common understanding on how to move the disarmament agenda forward, and make the world a safer place. Let us renew faith in the citizenry of this world that the UN is not powerless in the face of challenges in the field of disarmament. Given the chance, the UN is capable of achieving the goal of general and complete disarmament.

**I THANK YOU**