STATEMENT BY H. E. AMBASSADOR MARIA LUIZA RIBEIRO VIOTTI,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BRAZIL TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
at the General Debate of the First Committee

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(check against delivery)
Mr. Chairman, Ambassador Desra Percaya,

At the outset, the Brazilian delegation would like to congratulate you on assuming the chairmanship of this First Committee. We express our full confidence in your experience and diplomatic skills to successfully conduct our work over the next four weeks. Your appointment is also a recognition of Indonesia’s long-standing tradition and leadership in the promotion of multilateral disarmament efforts.

We take this opportunity also to thank Ms. Angela Kane for her opening remarks and for her work as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Brazil fully associates itself with the statements delivered by Chile on behalf of the CELAC countries and by Sweden on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

As in previous years, NAC will present its draft resolution named “Toward a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments”. Furthermore, the delegations of Brazil and New Zealand will be tabling their draft resolution on nuclear-weapon-free Southern Hemisphere and Adjacent Areas. We count with the same outstanding support those resolutions have received from delegations in previous sessions at this First Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear disarmament persists as a paramount priority for Brazil. During the General Debate of this year’s General Assembly, H.E. Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil, signaled out "the existence of immense arsenals that, besides threatening all humankind, aggravate tensions and hamper efforts towards peace".

We commend, in this regard, the UN Secretary-General’s recent article "The World is Over-Armed and Peace is Under-Funded", in which he points out that massive military spending and new investments in modernizing nuclear weapons – estimated at 4.6 billion dollars every day, at least – continue to reflect paradigms which are hard to explain in a post-Cold War world. While recalling that nuclear weapons are useless against today’s threats to international peace and security, being furthermore an incentive to proliferation, the UNSG proposes a dramatic cut on expenditures with the maintenance and modernization of these weapons to invest instead in social and economic development. Brazil could not be more in line with this proposal.

It is not admissible that, more than forty years after the entry into force of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and more than twenty years after the end of the Cold War, thousands of nuclear weapons not only continue to exist, but undergo unceasing modernization, as part of military doctrines, and are kept in unreduced levels of operational readiness. Brazil expresses its concern over persistent attempts to justify the possession of nuclear weapons, be it to sustain minimum security levels or to ensure an alleged undiminished security or to provide a hypothetical strategic stability, all these concepts being as outdated as the nuclear weapons themselves.

Whereas horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons has been a relative success of the NPT regime, the nuclear disarmament side of the bargain is where the "compliance deficit" continues to exist. It is time for nuclear-weapon States to fulfill the nuclear disarmament related measures they have agreed to implement under the treaty and pursuant to the action plans agreed at the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. The credibility and the effectiveness of the regime depend on all States abiding by their obligations under the NPT.

While we note that the overall numbers of nuclear weapons have decreased since the height of the Cold War and we welcome the implementation of another bilateral treaty between the two major nuclear powers aimed at reducing the number of certain types of weapons, we expect the P5 to take resolute steps towards an irreversible, transparent and verifiable dismantling of their nuclear arsenals, as part of the original bargain. This being done, we expect other States possessing nuclear weapons to follow the path.
Brazil is fully aware that achieving a world free of nuclear weapons cannot be done overnight. What we need however is a political horizon, with clear benchmarks and datelines to achieve this goal. Nuclear disarmament is not a matter of goodwill, but a legal commitment to be complied with. It is high time for the international community to start asking when and how it shall take place.

Mr. Chairman,

Along with nuclear disarmament, it is a legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States to be granted legally binding assurances from the NWS that such weapons will never be used or threatened to be used against them. Some of the nuclear-weapon States still insist on making reservations or unilateral interpretative declarations undermining the value of Treaties establishing nuclear weapons free zones. A revision of such statements is overdue. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons Brazil urges the concerned States to withdraw such statements and make their security assurances unequivocal and unconditional.

Brazil attaches utmost significance to the establishment of nuclear weapon free zones. The Treaty of Tlatelolco was States' first expression of their clear repudiation of nuclear weapons as weapons of choice in their international relations. In February, during the celebration of the 45th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region had the opportunity to reiterate their steady commitment to this pioneering instrument, which made, for the first time, in 1967, an entire, densely populated region free from the most ignominious weapons of mass destruction.

Likewise, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) embodies another successful regional initiative in the nuclear field. Transparency, dialogue, confidence-building and cooperation in the nuclear field are the cornerstone of the Argentine-Brazilian partnership. As stated by Minister Antonio Patriota, ABACC's 20th anniversary last year "invites a reflection on the example of Brazil and Argentina as a source of inspiration for other regions of the world".

Mr. Chairman,

In line with its unwavering commitment to the NPT and to the obligations contained therein, Brazil devotes high importance to decisions emanated from its Review Conferences, including the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East and the 2010 decision to convene a Conference on the Establishment of a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East in 2012. As such, Brazil is convinced that the successful convening of the Conference represents an essential part of the NPT and of the current review cycle. We urge all countries of the region to attend this Conference, which could represent the beginning of a promising process, designed to foster confidence-building measures among neighboring States. While not ignoring the specificities of the Middle East that would require appropriate adaptations, Brazil stands ready to share its successful experiences of both the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC).

Mr. Chairman,

Brazil is fully committed to the objectives of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and to the international efforts aimed at preventing non-State actors from gaining access to those weapons, as well as to related materials and technology. Brazil took part in the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit, last March, and in the High-Level Meeting on Countering Nuclear Terrorism, just a few weeks ago. While firmly recognizing the need for all States to reinforce their national controls over nuclear and related material, my country is of the view that a consistent and sustainable long-term international nuclear security strategy must necessarily include concrete measures in the field of disarmament. Only in the context of a world free from nuclear weapons will our overall concerns related to nuclear security be thoroughly tackled. Only the complete
elimination of nuclear weapons can ensure that they will never fall in the hands of non-State actors.

We were glad to verify that, during the recent High-Level Meeting in Countering Nuclear Terrorism, at the margins of the opening of the UNGA, a number of countries raised the issue of this linkage between nuclear security and nuclear disarmament, an aspect that the Final Declaration of the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit regrettably failed to reflect.

Let me stress however our position that the IAEA is the key multilateral forum for discussing nuclear security-related matters and establishing standards and regulations in this field. In this context, we welcome the fact that the Seoul Communiqué recognized the Agency’s essential responsibility and central role in the area of nuclear security. May I say that Brazil is also keen to discuss the role that the IAEA should play in future disarmament verification activities.

Mr. Chairman,

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a fundamental part of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We regret that, sixteen years after being opened for signature, the CTBT could not yet enter into force, pending ratification by eight States listed in its Annex II. We welcome the recent ratification of the treaty by Guatemala and by Indonesia and reiterate our call upon all States that have not yet signed or ratified the treaty, in particular the Annex II States, to do so as soon as possible. It is important to stress that not only the nuclear disarmament cause is undermined by lingering action on CTBT ratification, but also nuclear proliferation, which will continue to be a global risk if countries reserve the right to continue nuclear testing.

Even though we have failed thus far to take this first logical step towards nuclear disarmament, Brazil joins the international community’s call for the launching of negotiations on a treaty on fissile material. Discussions on this issue, particularly in the Conference on Disarmament, indicate, however, that the real difficulties rely not on procedural matters, but involve substantive ones, in particular that of the treaty’s scope. Given the huge quantities of plutonium and highly enriched uranium present in some countries, enough for producing weapons for centuries to come, we can easily question, from a disarmament perspective, the added value of a treaty that ignores the question of stocks or pre-existing materials. We should ask ourselves if a treaty that merely cuts future production of fissile material is in line with the aspirations of the international community.

To fully meet such expectations, Brazil believes that negotiating a treaty on fissile material should be part of a larger legal framework, that of a Nuclear Weapons Convention, standing side by side with other mutually-reinforcing instruments aimed at the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in a clear, yet realistic, timeframe.

Mr. Chairman,

These considerations lead us to the conclusion that we ought to count on a Conference on Disarmament ready to advance multilateral disarmament negotiations. The reasons for the stalemate at the CD are evidently political and not related to institutional or procedural issues. The resumption of the work of the CD requires discussing the root causes of permanent inaction in multilateral negotiations on disarmament. Each of the four core issues on the agenda of the Conference experience some level of resistance within the CD.

To address these issues, my country believes that any reform effort should consider the United Nations disarmament machinery as a whole and not only the Conference on Disarmament. This is why we reject any ultimatum to the CD and support the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly on Disarmament (SSOD-IV), one which can scrutinize the institutional framework erected by its first predecessor, in 1978, and adapt it to a post-Cold War era.
Mr. Chairman,

The Chemical Weapons Convention, which this year celebrates its 15th anniversary, should be praised as an unequivocal example of the success of multilateralism in the promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation, showing the world’s determination to dispose of a whole category of weapons of mass destruction. State Parties have shown their determination to follow their commitments under the Convention and we were pleased that an agreement could be reached in December 2011, stipulating a proper framework for the completion of the destruction of the remaining chemical arsenals while preserving the integrity of the Convention and the credibility of the OPCW.

With this issue settled, it is important to reflect on further issues that will be discussed and negotiated at the III Review Conference, in April 2013. The CWC is now an instrument of almost universal adherence. A number of key actors remain outside of its framework, however, and the Brazilian delegation would take this occasion to exhort all States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention without further delay.

Brazil is ready and willing to contribute to a successful III CWC Review Conference in 2013. This is an important opportunity to identify areas in which further progress should be sought in the future and to assure the vigor of the Convention.

As for the Biological Weapons Convention, Brazil was satisfied with the results of the last Review Conference, which established the basis for the next intersessional period, focusing on international cooperation, developments in science and technology, and national implementation. While we also welcome the agreement achieved on updating the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), we believe that the strengthening of CBMs cannot replace the existence of an effective verification regime based on a Protocol to the BWC.

Mr. Chairman,

As opposed to weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons do not pose an imminent threat to the survival of mankind. Every day, however, the uncontrolled spread and the irresponsible use of these weapons continues to account for an unacceptable human toll in different parts of the globe. It is clear that additional progress, at the multilateral level, is required so as to reinforce State’s control over international transfers of such armaments as well as to further regulate the use of certain categories of weapons. In this context, over the last twelve months, there have been two reasons for disappointment while trying to advance these goals.

The first and most recent was the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on an Arms Trade Treaty, last July, without the adoption of a final treaty draft. Since 2003, Brazil has been engaged in promoting the initiative of an ATT, as we believe that an objective, non-discriminatory and balanced instrument can help regulating the licit trade of conventional arms while providing a unprecedented contribution to international efforts in preventing and combating their illicit trafficking, in particular of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. Deliberations on an ATT have come a long way. Suffice to say that Brazil was ready to support the final draft put forth by the President of the Conference. As such, we can only share other delegations’ frustration on the outcome of the Conference. Yet we are pleased to note that a timely mobilization has been taking place in order to have a decision by this First Committee on the reconvening of the ATT Conference. Brazil would fully support such initiative.

The second reason for disappointment dates back to the end of 2011, when serious efforts in the context of the CCW towards the adoption of a multilateral agreement on cluster munitions were precluded by the inflexible approach of some. As a result, and for the near future, large quantities of these weapons – in particular the oldest arsenals shall continue to be retained, used and transferred without any sort of regulation. For Brazil, the adoption of a sixth protocol to the CCW on cluster munitions would have been a real accomplishment. It would promote the progressive engagement of main
producers and users of these weapons with a body of norms ruling an important subcategory of conventional weapons.

While there have been reasons for disappointment, there was also cause for contentment, however, in the area of conventional arms. The Second Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, last September, resulted in the consensual adoption of a final report and of some important decisions related to the forthcoming inter-sessional period until 2018. Brazil welcomes such a positive development, in particular the centrality ascribed to international cooperation and assistance with a view to promoting the Programme’s adequate implementation. As mentioned by the UN Secretary General, we also hope that this success should give further impetus to the efforts to conclude the Arms Trade Treaty process in the near future.

Meanwhile, the objective of banning anti-personnel landmines under the Ottawa Convention continues to advance. While much remains to be done, there has been progress in terms of demining and stocks’ destruction, as well as in the universalization of the Convention. However, the challenge of promoting the adherence of key States possessing landmines still remains.

Mr. Chairman,

Brazil continues to attach high priority to the objective of safeguarding outer-space for exclusively peaceful purposes. It is a matter of concern that, while the international community increasingly recognizes the need for promoting trust and confidence among nations on outer space activities, there persists serious resistance or indifference with regard to the urgency of adopting legally-binding frameworks on this issue. Some States consider that the best approach would be one of endorsing a number of political, voluntary-based commitments. Brazil believes that we can and we should aim for more. In our view, these voluntary arrangements do not fulfill the need for clear obligations binding States’ behavior, when we all know that militarization of outer space is already taking place. Before it is too late, we should work preventively to avoid further steps – those of placement of weapons in outer space, destruction or damage of satellites from ground-based platforms or the use of orbital objects to damage or destroy satellites. Therefore, Brazil remains fully committed to the promotion of negotiations on a legally-binding instrument that prevents the weaponisation of outer space.

The need for legal commitments is also present when it comes to preserving the security of global information and telecommunications systems. The interests of the international community as a whole rely on effective, balanced and cooperative agreements being pursued.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, I would like to wish you success in your task and reiterate Brazil’s full commitment to the work of this First Committee as we strive to promote a world free of weapons of mass destruction and based on more cooperative and friendly ties among Member States. In the transition we are now facing to a more multipolar international order, we must not take for granted that multipolarity will by itself provide better conditions for peace and security. We must work to accomplish this. We shall work to make cooperation prevail over confrontation. In seeking this, the United Nations and bodies such as this First Committee have a fundamental role to play.

I thank you.