



*The
Bahamas*

**THIRD SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
2005 REVIEW CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE
TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

GENERAL DEBATE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. PAULETTE BETHEL
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON BEHALF OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY [CARICOM]**

26 APRIL, 2004

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of thirteen members of the Caribbean Community [CARICOM] that are members of the United Nations, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and my own country, The Bahamas. CARICOM delegations congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of your Bureau, on your election to guide the work of this, the final session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference. We are confident that you will guide our work to a successful conclusion, and pledge our full support and cooperation in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

This session of the Preparatory Committee, and indeed the Review Conference itself, is faced with a daunting task, as we meet to assess the progress made in implementing the commitments undertaken at the 2000 Review Conference, and to chart the way forward to further achieve the purposes and goals of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. CARICOM States reaffirm their commitment to the implementation of the NPT, and we call on all States Parties to the NPT to fully implement their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty, and the commitments made at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. All present here recall the optimism that emanated from that conference, with the adoption of the Final Document and the 13 practical steps agreed by all States Parties to implement Article VI of the Treaty and paragraphs 3 and 4(c) of the 1995 Decision on 'Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament'.

Yet, four years later, that optimism has waned in the face of the very limited progress made in implementing those practical steps. CARICOM calls on all States to reaffirm their commitment to the implementation of those measures in pursuit of the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As we are all aware, other parts of the international disarmament machinery have become stalemated due to divergences of view. We cannot allow the NPT to follow suit. The NPT's near universality should continue to be a source of optimism and a sign of common ground in seeking to eliminate the spread and use of nuclear weapons.

While the international community has recently turned its attention to the very real danger of the acquisition and use of nuclear weapons by non-state actors, including terrorists, CARICOM would stress that this preoccupation should not detract from our agreed goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Rather, the international community should seek to ensure that existing obligations are fulfilled, while new threats and challenges are addressed effectively.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM's commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is embodied in the participation of all of its Member States in the Treaty of Tlatelolco. It is a source of immense satisfaction to CARICOM States that the Treaty of Tlatelolco now commands universal adherence in Latin America and the Caribbean, and has thus

created the world's first nuclear weapon free zone in a densely populated region. We encourage other States engaged in discussions to create nuclear-weapon-free zones to continue to move those processes forward in pursuit of the important goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Chairman,

The elimination of the testing of nuclear weapons remains a critical element in the overall process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. To this end, CARICOM states call for a renewed commitment to promoting the entry into force, and the implementation of both the letter and the spirit of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty [CTBT]. As we are all aware, the entry into force of the CTBT has yet to occur, due to the absence of prompt signature and ratification of the CTBT by those states whose ratification is required for its entry into force. We applaud the work of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation [CTBTO] in promoting the entry into force of the treaty. In our region, we are pleased that Belize is the latest CARICOM state to have ratified the CTBT, having deposited its instrument of ratification on 26 March, 2004. We also welcome the conclusion of a cooperation agreement between the CTBTO and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean [OPANAL], the first of its kind for the CTBTO.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM States are particularly committed to the issue of nuclear safety. To this end, all Members of CARICOM have concluded Safeguards Agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA], and the process of signing Additional Protocols has begun in the Region.

However, the most important nuclear safety issue for CARICOM States remains the transboundary movement of radioactive materials. CARICOM was particularly heartened by the endorsement, by the 2000 Review Conference, of the IAEA regulations for the safe transport of radioactive materials. The transshipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea, and the concomitant threat to the environmental and economic sustainability of the small island developing states of the region, remains a grave concern to CARICOM. CARICOM States have consistently voiced their concerns in this regard in numerous fora, including the General Assembly, and in the ongoing Commission for Sustainable Development, where explicit reference has been made to this issue in the Strategy Document of the Alliance of Small Island States for the upcoming International Meeting to review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

In this context, CARICOM welcomed the 2000 Review Conference's explicit recognition of the concerns of small island developing states and other coastal states with regard to the transportation of radioactive materials by sea, and viewed this as an acknowledgement of the responsibility of the international community to protect the marine space of *en route* coastal states from the risks inherent in the transport of these materials. We are particularly encouraged by the ongoing efforts

of the IAEA in this regard, including the adoption of the Code of Practice on the International Transboundary Movement of Radioactive Waste, and the annual resolution adopted by the IAEA General Conference on Measures to Strengthen International Cooperation in Nuclear, Radiation and Transport Safety and Waste Management. We call on all States to fully implement these instruments, including the call for states shipping radioactive materials to provide assurances to potentially affected States that their national regulations take into account IAEA Transport Regulations, and to provide relevant information relating to shipments of such materials. CARICOM States recognize the need for safety and security relating to these shipments and the right of States under Article IV of the NPT to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. However, we affirm that these considerations should not be inimical to the sustainable development of other states.

In addition to the provision of information regarding the shipment of radioactive materials, CARICOM States continue to call for the establishment of a comprehensive regulatory framework to promote state responsibility with respect to disclosure, prior informed consent, liability and compensation in the event of accidents. While we appreciate the steps undertaken by States to prevent the likelihood of accidents, we cannot overstate the damage that would be done to the ecosystems of our countries, and the potentially catastrophic impact on our vulnerable economies should an accident occur.

CARICOM States remain ready to engage in constructive dialogue with the relevant States in this process, in order to improve our mutual understanding, to build confidence and to enhance our communication, as we seek to take the necessary steps to ensure the sustainability and safety of the small island States of our region.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are challenges that remain unique to this period of human history and development. Without real commitments to progressively eliminate nuclear arsenals, and prevent the proliferation of nuclear technology for non-peaceful purposes, we run the risk of nullifying all of the commitments that we as Member States have made over the previous decade for social, economic and human development. That risk, combined with the continuing menace of nuclear conflagration, is unacceptably high. We must remind ourselves that there can be no backtracking on commitments, and that we must live up to the obligations freely undertaken. For its part, CARICOM remains ready to live up to its obligations, and calls on all States to do the same.

Thank you.

