



BANGLADESH

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STATEMENT

BY

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AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE
IN THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 57TH UNGA

New York, 02 October 2002

DISARMAMENT

Mr. Chairman,

Congratulations are owed to you upon your election to our Chair. In the same vein, felicitations are also due to the other members of the Bureau. The Under Secretary General deserves to be thanked for his comprehensive statement. We welcome our new members Switzerland, and Timor Leste to this Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

We are meeting here for the debate after a rather difficult and eventful year following the dastardly terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. This has led to new thinking in the concept of security.

While efforts to resolve major conflicts in many parts of the world have shown hopeful progress, we have seen the emergence of a new sense of unease, tension and instability. In spite of considerable initial success, the war on terrorism remains unfinished and to a large extent wanting in proper direction for the next phase. The situation in the Middle East and the Gulf is seemingly sinking deeper into the morass of wider conflicts. There is no sign of lessening of violence in the Middle East as efforts by the quartet and other influential players fall badly short of the much needed serious and concerted push for revival of the peace process. The threat of new war in the Gulf appears to be looming larger by the day in spite of efforts by many to avert it.

Peace and security in Afghanistan remain illusive. This, in spite of victory over the Al-Qaida and the Taliban. Reconstruction, rebuilding and rehabilitation efforts are yet to gain any momentum. The situation is fraught with the danger of slipping back to anarchy if the international community fails to garner considerably more resources and efforts under well thought out and well coordinated plans and programmes.

Tension between the nuclear capable neighbours in South Asia, festering conflicts in different parts of Africa, in spite of positive developments in Angola, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Congo, the hot spots in Eastern Europe, the slow progress in implementation of peace building in former Yugoslavia – all are continuous causes for concern.

International security is also under constant threat from continuously increasing gap between the countries of the North and the South – the gap between the rich and the poor, from injustice, inequity and unfairness – real and perceived – political, economic and social, from lack of respect for democracy, human rights and rule of law, from natural calamities, famines and diseases. Delegations have addressed all these issues in general terms in the previous weeks at the General debate in the plenary. Many of these issues will receive more specific attention in the other Committees.

In this Committee we focus on the issues of disarmament as they relate to the UN Charter objectives of promoting peace and security and contributing to socio-economic and political development across the world, making it a better place to live in.

Mr. Chairman,

Our predecessors, who founded this august body- the UN and wrote its charter, in their wisdom realized the great need and value of disarmament as one of the key steps towards achieving the above objectives. They put their faith in the four Ds – detente, disarmament, de-colonization and development. Major achievements were recorded in the first half century of UN in the area of disarmament. Much more remained to be done to move towards the ultimate objective of general and complete disarmament.

However, we are sad to note a reversal in the trend. It appears that disarmament has gone out of fashion. There is a discernible reduction of attention and interest among member countries on these issues. Two apparently contrary reasons seem to be responsible. One, is a sort of complacency at whatever have been achieved so far and two, a sense of frustration, powerlessness and hopelessness on the part of most member states that major military powers are not willing or ready to move seriously towards general and complete disarmament for all kinds of political and other reasons of their own.

Jonathan Dean, writing in a UN Association of USA Publication, says about the last one year, and I quote "The modest progress achieved in disarmament during the past year coincided with a number of serious reverses in multilateral arms control and disarmament". Unquote. However, the Secretary General in his report on the working of the organization perhaps deliberately tries to look at the little positive

developments witnessed during the period and to largely ignore the negatives. The first sentence of the relevant section is but an apology for an admission of the reality. It reads and I quote, "There was little international cooperation in multilateral forums on disarmament the past year". Unquote.

Signing of the Moscow Treaty by the Presidents of the USA and the Russian Federation on 24 May 2002 to reduce strategic nuclear weapons considerably was perhaps the single most important positive event in disarmament during the past one year. Very few believe that this would succeed in counteracting the damage done by the demise of the ABM treaty. The general feeling is that the new treaty could prove more useful if the concepts of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility were built into it with greater clarity.

Among the other positive developments are increased participation by member states in the UN Register of Conventional Arms, regional initiatives in implementing the Programme of Action adopted by the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects held in 2001, progress in mine action leading to further reduction in production and transfer of landmines, some progress in specific conflict or post conflict zones in practical disarmament in the form of collection of arms and ammunitions from former combatants or illegal holders and some success in DDR in general. In this connection efforts of the concerned parties including the UNDDA, Group of Interested States in Practical disarmament as well as some NGOs are worth commending. The successful holding, earlier this year, of the first Prepcom for the next round of NPT review conference is also worth mentioning.

An event of great positive significance is the recent declaration by Cuba of its intention to join the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state. We welcome their decision. We call on the remaining three states, not yet parties to the NPT, to follow Cuba's example at the earliest.

Mr. Chairman,

Sadly, the list of negatives is not only much longer, but also disproportionately more serious and disturbing. I shall only mention some of the more serious ones to flag our deep concern, e.g. the scrapping of the ABM treaty, shifting emphasis on missile defence systems, Nuclear posture review by Nuclear Weapon States, renewed emphasis on tactical nuclear weapons, nuclear targeting of non-nuclear Weapon States, CTBT remaining far from entering into force, continuing efforts to develop new and more deadly conventional and nuclear weapons, renewed arms race, particularly among major military powers including nuclear powers, dramatic increase in Military spending by major military powers, continuing deadlock in negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on nuclear disarmament and a treaty on fissile materials, as well as on efforts to prevent arms race in the outer space, suspension of the review of the Biological Weapons Convention etc. Disarmament has taken so much of a back seat that this year the Disarmament Commission could not even hold its regular annual session.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite progress achieved in recent times, Bangladesh remains among the vast majority of developing countries constantly pre-occupied with the struggle to maintain their relevance in this world of globalization by confronting the challenges of socio-economic and political development in the face of lack of resources, widespread poverty, diseases and natural calamities. We can neither afford nor do we want to spend large amounts on armaments and military budgets. We are fully aware of the value of disarmament as an essential and important factor for achieving peace and security within and among nations as well as for creating conducive environment for and contributing directly towards development. I am sure all countries, big or small rich or poor have the same realization of the value of disarmament, even if some may not like to publicly acknowledge it.

There can be no debate that disarmament is closely linked to development as is security. Disarmament involves – non proliferation and end to arms race, reduction in armaments and military personnel, bilateral, regional and international treaties, other confidence building measures, reduction in military expenditure freeing resources for other development activities. It also involves DDR. All these contribute directly and significantly to enhanced security as well as political economic and social development. Sustainable disarmament is also a precursor and pre-condition for sustainable security and sustainable development. Disarmament leads to lessening of tension, reduces prospect of war and allows people to focus more fully on other developmental challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh, therefore, calls on all member states of the UN big and small, rich and poor, to seriously consider the growing negative trends in the area of disarmament and coordinate their efforts to

bring renewed vitality in its pursuit keeping in view the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament. It should be pursued multilaterally, bilaterally as well as unilaterally. It should be pursued Globally, regionally as well as

domestically. To this end my delegation would like to particularly call for a few concrete steps e.g.

- i) Revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament by pushing seriously for progress on deadlocked negotiations. The CD should be used as the primary forum to negotiate all global treaties and convention on disarmament. Attempts to by-pass the UN system in such negotiations would give rise to questions of legitimacy and credibility.
- ii) Ensuring regular holding of meetings of the Disarmament Commission in order for it to be able to complete the tasks assigned to it by the GA and to undertake new tasks as they arise,
- iii) Ensuring implementation of the 13 step Action Plan adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference,
- iv) Taking steps to ensure early entry into force of the CTBT.
- v) Putting greater emphasis on improving monitoring and verification regimes in respect of all disarmament and non-proliferation related treaties and conventions by increasing transparency.
- vi) Ensuring irreversibility of all disarmament measures.
- vii) Strengthening safeguard measures to ensure that nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction as well as chemical and biological weapons and related technology do not fall into the hands of terrorists.
- viii) Promoting regional disarmament arrangements by encouraging dialogue in different regions. The UNDDA and the Regional Centres for Peace and disarmament could play a pro-active role to facilitate such dialogues. In this context I must mention that the continued failure of the concerned authorities to shift the Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific to Kathmandu, its designated location, defies our comprehension.
- ix) The concept of zones free from Nuclear Weapons and other weapons of Mass Destruction should be pursued to cover more regions. Particular emphasis should be given to the early achievement of such status in the Middle East. In this context we emphasize the urgent need to persuade Israel to join the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state and place all its nuclear installations under international monitoring. Like other states in the region they must also be persuaded to give up procurement, production, stockpiling and use of all other forms of weapons of mass destruction including chemical and biological weapons.
- x) In spite of the demonstration of nuclear capability by two member states in South Asia, renewed efforts should be made to persuade them to relinquish nuclear option and to join the NPT as non nuclear weapon states.
- xi) Renewed efforts should be made to reverse the trend of increasing military expenditure, particularly by major military powers. The concepts of peace dividend and creation of a global fund for poverty alleviation should be seriously reconsidered in this context.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh is committed constitutionally to the goal of general and complete disarmament. We are already party to almost all disarmament related treaties and conventions, including NPT, CTBT, CWC, CCW, APMT, and the Biological Weapons Convention. I wish to reiterate our firm commitment to actively pursue disarmament in cooperation with our neighbours as well as all other members of this august Body. However, in concluding I would like to emphasize that Bangladesh, like many other countries, individually has only a marginal ability to influence the global issues of disarmament in spite of its commitment. But those who can, must do more. And of course, by pooling our efforts, countries big and small – rich and poor – we definitely can achieve much more.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.