



**SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Statement by Mrs. PHAM THI NGA
Delegate of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
at the General Debate of the First Committee
of the 57th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
New York, *Oct.* 3, 2002

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I have the great honour to congratulate Ambassador Semacula Kiwanuka on assuming the Chairmanship of the First Committee. I fully believe that, with your profound knowledge in the field of disarmament, you will skillfully guide the discussion of the First Committee to a successful outcome. My delegation's felicitations are also extended to other members of the Bureau. We pay tribute to your predecessor - Mr. Andre Erdos for his excellent work with the First Committee last year.

My delegation is very grateful to the Under Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs - Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala - for his comprehensive statement on the key issues facing the First Committee. While fully support the statement made later by the Representative of Myanmar on behalf of the ASEAN member states, my delegation would like comment on some issues that are of particular interest to my country.

Mr. Chairman,

The general disarmament and arms control remain one of the highest priorities on the United Nations' agenda. My country consistently advocates complete and total disarmament especially with regard to the elimination of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well other weapons of mass destruction. Vietnam has ratified the Convention on Chemical Weapons, acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, signed the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

With the regards to the multilateral regime to promote general disarmament and arms control, my delegation notes with deep concern that, this year brought little progress in international cooperation on disarmament.

The Review of the Biological Weapons Convention was suspended until November 2002, the CTBT has still not entered into force, the Conference on Disarmament remains deadlocked on negotiations on nuclear disarmament, and global military spending has escalated to \$839 billion, as Secretary General's 2002 Report remarks. More tangible efforts are necessary in order to achieve complete disarmament.

Nuclear Disarmament is the toughest hurdle on the way to the complete disarmament. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a milestone in halting the global spread of nuclear proliferation and in promoting disarmament, but many provisions of the NPT Final Document agreed by consensus at the Review Conferences in 2000 and 2001 have not been met. My delegation believes that all nuclear weapons states must reaffirm their unequivocal commitment to the Treaty as well as fulfill their obligations under Article VI. They must bear the primary responsibility to halt the development, production, and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. We commend the signing of the US-Russia Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty on 24 May 2002. The decision of Cuba to accede to the to the NPT and to ratify the Tlatelolco Treaty reflected Cuba's strong commitment to the disarmament issue deserves our warmest felicitations.

Mr. Chairman,

The tragic event of 11 September 2001 was a wake up call to all of us, giving rise to greater concern about the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups. Therefore, we express our serious concern about the decision of one nuclear weapons state to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM). This action contravenes the principle of irreversibility of nuclear disarmament agreements and constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

The Vietnamese government fully complies with the Plan of Action adopted by the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. Vietnam exercises strict control over the manufacturing, stockpiling, transporting and possession of small arms and light weapons within our jurisdiction. Vietnam also actively participates in the cooperative framework of the World Customs Organization and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), as well as with our

colleagues in ASEAN, in dealing with transnational crimes and the illegal flows of arms. However, while global measures aimed at preventing illegal trafficking in weapons, they should be not, in any manner, prevent states from exercising their right of self-defense and security in protecting their territorial integrity and political independence, in accordance with the UN Charter.

The Government of Vietnam strongly supports the establishment of nuclear weapon-free zones in all geographic regions. Establishment of such zones would contribute to ending the proliferation of nuclear weapons - one positive step in global nuclear disarmament -- thus contributing to regional as well as international peace and security. In this spirit, Vietnam acceded to the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ), which reflects the earnest aspiration of Southeast Asian countries for peace and security. At this point, my delegation wishes to call on all nuclear weapon states (NWS) to ratify, as soon as possible, the Protocol annexed to this Treaty so as to demonstrate their serious commitment to the goal of a nuclear-weapon free world. We also commend Mongolia's declaration of nuclear weapons-free status and consider it a contribution to the establishment of a Central Asia nuclear-weapons-free zone.

We share the view of other speakers that the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva must be strengthened as a unique multinational forum for negotiating issues related to disarmament. We believe that disarmament efforts must be regulated by multilateral frameworks. We hope that the States concerned will do their utmost by demonstrating their political will to break the deadlock, thus making the CD an effective instrument in negotiations for a verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Vietnam attaches great importance to the promotion of international use of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms in reporting military expenditures to increase transparency in armaments. Vietnam annually provides full information required.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Vietnam, as a member of the UN and of the international community, has done and will continue to do its utmost, to actively contribute to the work of the United Nations and to the work of the First Committee. Once again, I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.