

EGYPT



مصر

The Permanent Mission of Egypt
to the United Nations
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**Statement by the Delegation of Egypt
before the First Committee of the General Assembly
Disarmament and International Security**

7 October 2002

Counsellor Alaa Issa

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Mr Chairman,

I wish at the outset to convey the congratulations of the delegation of Egypt on your election to the chair of the First Committee, and our heartfelt congratulations to all other members of the Bureau.

Mr Chairman,

As we meet in the First Committee to consider issues related to disarmament and international security, our assessment of progress in these fields during the past year as well as emerging trends leaves no doubt in our mind that we are indeed witnessing difficult times, where positive developments have been overshadowed by serious challenges to the multilateral disarmament infrastructure and to the future of multilateral efforts in these areas.

On a positive note, the delegation of Egypt welcomes the successful conclusion of negotiations between the U.S. and the Russian Federation and signature of the Treaty of Moscow, which launched a new security partnership and strategic dialogue between the two countries. It is our sincere hope that both States will eventually apply the principle of irreversibility to the nuclear weapons to be de-alerted or taken out of deployment over the next decade, thereby providing a true disarmament contribution towards the total elimination of nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament.

We welcome the endeavours of the five Central Asian States to establish a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in their region which we hope will add impetus to the establishment of such zones in other areas of the world. We also welcome Cuba's intent to adhere to the NPT, thereby bringing us closer to realizing universal adherence to the Treaty. Yet while Cuba's intent highlights the critical importance of the NPT as the cornerstone of both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, we regret that the urgent goal of achieving universality of the Treaty remains elusive, both in South Asia and in the Middle East and that nuclear disarmament efforts continue to lack the necessary momentum.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, an unequivocal commitment was undertaken by all NPT States Parties in 2000 to the accomplishment of nuclear disarmament and thirteen steps were agreed upon to lead us to this objective. The responsibility of the five nuclear weapon States to pursue the elimination of their nuclear arsenals is both a moral and a legal one, and it is within this logic that Egypt shall be presenting with her partners in the New Agenda Coalition a draft resolution that addresses, among other issues, the laxity that has crept into nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts since May 2000.

With regard to global non-proliferation efforts, it is with deep regret that we are now before another session of the General Assembly with no

progress or results to show towards achieving universality of the NPT in the Middle East, an objective that is overwhelmingly supported by the wider body of the international community, whether in the context of the General Assembly or the NPT States Parties. In fact, the Middle East has witnessed more violence and escalation in rhetoric during the past year than any of us could have thought possible. Achievement of universal adherence to the NPT in the Middle East remains a priority for Egypt as well as for the overwhelming membership of the international community, and we shall continue to pursue this issue in the General Assembly through a resolution calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in the Middle East and another that calls upon Israel, the only state in the Middle East that has not yet acceded to the NPT, to accede to the Treaty.

Furthermore, we welcome the announcement by Iraq to allow the resumption of arms inspections on its soil by the UN and its cooperation in these efforts, which are an essential step towards the lifting of sanctions that were imposed on Iraq over a decade ago. But we must also recall that the efforts to be pursued in Iraq were mandated by the UN Security Council in 1991 as steps towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and all missiles for their delivery. Despite this fact, more than a decade has passed since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 687 and no progress has been achieved towards reaching this essential objective. It is our firm belief that the credibility of the non-proliferation regime in the Middle East and beyond will depend to a significant extent on future action by the international community and by the Security Council towards realizing the wider objectives of disarmament and non-proliferation efforts in the Middle East.

Mr Chairman,

As I mentioned earlier, there exist serious challenges to the multilateral disarmament infrastructure and to the future of multilateral efforts in arms control and non-proliferation. The updating of strategic doctrines in a manner that sets out new rationales for the continued retention of nuclear weapons, their development and deployment and even for their possible use, is certainly among the more serious challenges, but equally critical is the challenge to multilateral action with regard to disarmament and international peace and security. The impasse with regard to the CD Programme of Work is also a case in point. While there is recognition that the issues of nuclear disarmament, prevention of an arms race in outer space and a fissile material treaty are all issues of concern to the CD membership and to the broader international community, there has been no reciprocity in understanding and accepting the legitimate security concerns among CD members. In our view, the crisis in the CD transcends the tactical procedures and linkages between the elements of the Programme of Work and is symptomatic of a much deeper ailment in the state of international relations and of the role that multilateral action and institutions should play.

Another issue that is equally pertinent has been that of Missiles. Egypt commends the work of the UN Group of Governmental Experts assigned to prepare a study of the issue in all its aspects and endorses the fruit of their labour. We are pleased that the Group succeeded in producing a report on this complex issue, and stress that despite any misgivings concerning the brevity of the recommendation section of the reports, it must be viewed as an initial effort by the United Nations to address a very complex and contentious issue and, as such, this initial and only attempt at multilateral engagement on the issue of Missiles must constitute the basis for further work by the Organisation.

On the other hand, the International Code of Conduct against the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles (ICOC) has undergone several phases of development since its inception and circulation by the States members of the MTCR two years ago. Egypt engaged in good faith in the efforts to consider the ICOC during two meetings held in Paris and Madrid in 2002, but somehow these efforts always fell short of the necessary requirements of a multilateral exercise. It is our view that the credibility and success of the ICOC, or of any non-negotiated instrument, will depend largely on whether the final version drafted by the authors manages to address the issues pertinent to the debate on missiles in a balanced and objective manner and thereby succeeds in attracting support from those States that possess ballistic missiles.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, it is important to recall the responsibility of States individually, and where possible regionally, to work towards implementation of the UN Programme of Action adopted in 2001. This is particularly important as we approach the 2003 meeting to assess progress in implementation of the Programme of Action.

Finally, I wish to draw attention to Egypt's continued commitment to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It is our intention to present a resolution on this issue to the First Committee and we are now engaged with consultations among interested states to develop the resolution and ensure the broadest possible support for it.

Thank you Mr Chairman,