



# CROATIA

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**Statement by  
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Permanent Representative  
of the Republic of Croatia**

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General Debate**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me begin by congratulating you, on behalf of the Croatian Delegation, on your election as the Chairman of the First Committee, as well as to other members of the Bureau. I am confident that your substantial experience in the security sphere will have a positive impact on the work of this year's Committee. In this regard, I assure you of the full support of my Delegation.

In the same vein, we welcome the appointment of Mr. Nobuyasu Abe as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and would like in particular to echo his call addressed to the First Committee to "urgently explore practical ways to enhance international peace and security through multilateral cooperation."

Mr. Chairman,

Croatia has undergone a transformation from a country benefiting from international security mechanisms on its territory, to a country contributing to international peace and security. In the 90s there were thousands of members of international peace-keeping mission in Croatia, whilst today Croatian experts and troops are taking part in five UN peace-keeping missions throughout the world, including a military police unit with the ISAF III and IV missions in Afghanistan.

Croatia is also playing a key role in the long-term confidence-building and stabilization of the region of South Eastern Europe. We are deeply engaged in regional disarmament and regional stability-building, as well as the promotion of good neighborly relations. Our strong belief is that South Eastern Europe is on the path to become a success story, not only in terms of enhanced stability, but also through the economic recovery.

Mr. Chairman,

Evidently, 'reform' is the prevailing word of the current session of the General Assembly, as well as of most of its committees. In the past week, we have heard a number of well elaborated proposals on reshaping the work of the First Committee, and we are encouraged by the fact that all of them share similar elements. Improving the Committee's working methods seems to be on everyone's mind, thereby indicating the possibility of reaching a consensual conclusion. While we understand the frustrations of many with the global situation in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, we invite all delegations to try to placate them at least a little bit by agreeing on a number of steps which would make our future work more rewarding. One important element of the proposed reform is shortening our speeches and distributing the longer version of national statements. In contribution to this practice, I will make just several points, while integral version of Croatia's speech will be distributed.

Mr. Chairman,

Croatia has been following with great interest multilateral discussions on nuclear disarmament for many years now and we are very concerned that year after year almost all the major international treaty negotiating bodies have failed to make any significant progress in their work. The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty is still far from entering into force, seven years after it was opened for signature, while the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

preparatory meetings in many ways mirror endless discussions held under the roof of the Conference on Disarmament. The warning signs are there for all to see. We have to ask ourselves: What is the price of failure? Are we prepared to pay that price?

Croatia believes that further progress in nuclear disarmament issues must start with the full and effective implementation of decisions and agreements already in force. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has confirmed its role as the most important international deterrence instrument against the threat of nuclear arms proliferation, while conversely promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As a non-nuclear NPT State Party Croatia adds its support to the goals contained in the New Agenda Coalition. We believe that it is legitimate right and vital interest that other non-nuclear NPT State Parties come together and call upon nuclear weapons states to abide by the obligations they themselves have agreed to implement through the Non-proliferation Treaty. Multilateral treaty bodies should not become the extension of power politics and positioning, without regard to the legitimate interests of the great majority of UN member states, whose destiny in many ways lies in the hands of these select few.

In an effort to promote the goals set out in the NPT, Croatia along with many others submitted a report to the preparatory meeting of the NPT this year on progress it has made on the implementation of Article VI of the Treaty and paragraph 4(c) of the 1995 Decision on "Principles and Objectives of Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament". We hope these reports will add to making general NPT implementation more transparent and that countries with similar backgrounds will follow this example.

We believe it is essential that states supporting the CTBT focus their efforts more vehemently on achieving the Treaty's early entry into force. It would be a crucial step forward in the history of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The only effect the rejection of the CTBT may have on national security grounds is to encourage a policy of secret propagation of weapons of mass destruction in unstable regions and among rogue elements. We need to lead by example, and make issues like acceding to the CTBT a priority.

Although we consider national moratoria to be a way of refraining from nuclear tests, it is our firm belief that a universal mechanism is the only true protection from nuclear test-caused devastation. We should exercise our wisdom and gather all efforts to achieve the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Croatia has added its support to the work of the Organization on the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) by hosting three World Congresses on Chemical and Biological Terrorism, with a special focus on the subject "Chemical and Biological War without Chemical or Biological Weapons".

In September 2002 Croatia along with the OPCW hosted the First International Assistance and Delivery Exercise (ASSISTEX) in line with Article X of the CWC Convention. We believe that the conclusions and lessons learned from this exercise, freely available at OPCW headquarters in the Hague, will go a long way in helping to streamline response times and actions that may be triggered due to the possible activation of Article X.

For its part, Croatia has offered the OPCW a Radiological, Biological and Chemical Decontamination Unit for the particular purpose of offering international assistance and protection, and is preparing an Agreement with the OPCW in this regard.

On the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, Croatia was actively involved in the work of the Ad Hoc Group of States and is to the BTWC on negotiating an implementing Protocol to the BTWC. During that time, Croatia made significant contributions towards the successful outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Group, such as suggesting criteria and lists for human, animal and plant pathogens and toxins that were used as an integral part of the work of the Group. We are deeply disappointed with the breakdown of negotiations during the Fifth Review Conference of the BTWC.

Although Croatia is actively involved in the new round of talks based on the outcomes of the work of the Ad Hoc Group, and although we fully endorse the current proposals and efforts aimed at forming national implementation measures and legislation for BTWC implementation, this can only be a temporary solution.

We strongly encourage the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Group in some form, because only a legally binding multilateral instrument will have a lasting and permanent effect.

Croatia has in the past two years done much work to tighten its export legislation so as to add its weight in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their components. Croatia took part in the Launching Conference for the International Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, now aptly named the Hague Code of Conduct, and as a Subscribing State supports the view that this new multilateral initiative, with potential for wide adherence, will provide the international community with additional means for increasing global security, as well as isolate dissenters.

Croatia took a step further this year by hosting a visit by the Chairman of the Missile Technology Control Regime and presented him with the achievements made on export control of sensitive materials and weapons components and systems. Croatia feels that it is ready to take part as a member in this as well as other similar regimes like the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, to which it has also submitted an application for membership. We hope that our applications will be looked upon favorably and look forward to return correspondence on this issue as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

Croatia is pleased with the progress the Ottawa Convention has made on the road to universalization, which, in our opinion, is the only proof needed to confirm that the Convention has set a new international norm on the issue of anti-personnel mines.

Although mines are less of a problem in Croatia than they once were, Croatia is still a mine affected state. We believe though that through the joint efforts of the Croatian Mine Action Center (CROMAC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the numerous personnel involved in mine action on the ground throughout the country, and with generous international assistance, Croatia will be free of mines by 2009.

As one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Ottawa Convention, Croatia has actively participated in the work of the Convention through its many formal and informal working groups and committees. In 2001-2002 Croatia Co-Chaired the Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction, and in September 2003 has, along with Australia, assumed the position of Co-Chair of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-economic Integration.

Croatia feels that the work of the Convention has shown marked success in certain areas like stockpile destruction, while in others, notably assistance in rehabilitation of mine victims needs stronger commitment at both national and international levels. Financial assistance to the victims of mines has been stagnant over the previous two years, which, having in mind the increase in the total number of those injured by anti-personnel mines, is reason for great concern. As Co-Chair of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance within the Ottawa Convention, Croatia is determined not only to follow the guidelines set by former Co-Chairs, but also to promote new measures and encourage new steps to increase direct communication between the possible donor and recipient. Even more importantly, Croatia wishes to re-affirm responsibility of all actors engaged in mine action, both states parties and NGOs to ensure all necessary support - both institutional and financial, symbolic and substantive - for full rehabilitation and re-integration of survivors of land mines.

On CCW issues, Croatia welcomes the successful completion of negotiations by the Group of Governmental Experts' coordinator on a Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War and fully supports calls that this document becomes legally binding for all countries wishing to accede to it. Moreover, even though Croatia firmly believes that the prime responsibility for clearing explosive remnants of war lies with the country that deployed these weapons, we also accept the solution contained in the Protocol whereby the country that deployed the explosive ordinance would cooperate closely with the country in control of a contaminated territory in eventual clearance operations.

Croatia supports a continuation of discussions on the issue of Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM). We have a certain amount of understanding for the position of those countries that have warned of the high costs of the recommended modifications contained in the MOTAPM proposal, and therefore believe that this is an issue which requires further exploration.

As a country that experienced war and its dark legacy firsthand, Croatia has been able to make practical use of the plethora of international instruments dealing with small arms and light weapons. Croatia participated in and submitted its report to the July meeting of the UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Small Arms and Light Weapons, held under the able Chairmanship of Ms. Kuniko Inoguchi. Croatia regularly reports to the OSCE Document on SALW, including providing information on measures with regard to the import and export of small arms and light weapons as well as national procedures for the control of the manufacture of SALW, national legislation on SALW and stockpile management and destruction of surplus procedures.

Moreover, Croatia supports and actively participates in the work of the Stability Pact Implementation Plan on Combating the Proliferation of SALW, including with the Southeast Europe Clearing-House for the Control of SALW (SEESAC). Even though Croatia's role in the work of the Clearing-House is becoming more advisory than participatory, we believe that it provides an excellent forum in which Southeast European countries can meet and

exchange information on SALW issues, as well as being a focal point where donors can initiate programs needed in the region. Last week, Croatia hosted the Regional Steering Group meeting of the Clearing-House.

Croatia is also the host of another very successful Stability Pact project– the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Center (RACVIAC) – established through the joint efforts of Croatia and Germany.

RACVIAC's goal is to assist in the process of creating greater transparency, openness and predictability in the area of military security, cooperation and dialogue between participating states. Its primary area of work concerns the implementation of regional arms control and arms limitation documents such as Articles II, IV and V of Annex I-B of the Dayton Peace Accords and the Vienna Document 99. With over 20 participating states, RACVIAC frequently organizes seminars and workshops on personnel training in implementing verification arms control agreements, and assists countries in the region to more effectively participate in international forums on arms control and limitation agreements and confidence building exercises. Currently, RACVIAC's methods of work are being reviewed by participating states in an effort to extend its activities to include holding seminars and providing information on other arms control agreements and initiatives, such as implementing obligations on small arms and light weapons instruments or anti-personnel mines.

Mr. Chairman.

I would like to close with a few words on the work of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Croatia would like to express its deep dissatisfaction with the fact that the CD, the only multilateral negotiating body devoted to arms control and disarmament, has been unable to agree on a program of work for over seven years and commence negotiations of substantive questions on its agenda.

In this regard, Croatia, like many others, supports in its entirety the proposal put forward by Brazilian Ambassador Celso Amorim in document CD/1624 as well as the five Ambassadors proposal for continuing the work of the CD (CD/1693), modified in the intervention by the Belgium Ambassador in document CD/1693/Rev.1.

Croatia cannot agree with calls for linking or conditioning the start of negotiations on priority issues such as on a Fissile Materials Cut-Off Treaty with other items on the Agenda of the CD. The CD should start work on those areas where agreement already exists and work towards gaining consensus on those issues where the climate for full negotiations is still not ripe, such as on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space.

Furthermore, Croatia would like to reiterate its disappointment that still no progress has been made on the issue of CD enlargement. A number of countries, 22 in all, have been waiting for many years for members of this prestigious negotiating body to address their requests for membership. Croatia, for one, is discouraged with the unwillingness on the part of several CD member states to even consider opening the doors of the CD to those of us who are willing to make active and positive contribution to debates relating to global disarmament questions. Croatia stands second behind Greece on the overall chronological list of countries waiting to enter the CD, and believes that when the time comes should be the first country from its regional group to be offered membership.