

EGYPT



مصر

The Permanent Mission of Egypt
to the United Nations
New York

بعثة مصر الدائمة
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Statement

by the

Delegation of Egypt

Counsellor Alaa Issa

General Debate of the first committee
of the 58th session of the General Assembly

New York
Friday, 10 October 2003

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Mr Chairman

Allow me at the outset to express my sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that you will guide our work to a successful result, given the outstanding reputation that precedes you. My congratulations go also to all other members of the Bureau.

I also wish to welcome His Excellency Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. It is indeed a pleasure to see him at the helm of the Organization's activities in the field of disarmament, an area where we will all benefit from his expertise and intellectual input. I would also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for his stewardship and contribution over the course of five years.

As we meet to consider issues related to disarmament and international security, our assessment of the limited progress achieved over the past year leaves no doubt as to the difficult times we are witnessing and the severity of the challenges to multilateral disarmament work.

I wish now to address several specific issues:

Nuclear Disarmament: An unequivocal commitment was undertaken by all NPT States Parties in 2000 to achieve nuclear disarmament and 13 steps were agreed upon to lead us to that objective. The nature of this commitment is in our view both legal and moral and places a particular responsibility on the five nuclear-weapon States to pursue the elimination of their nuclear arsenals. Based upon this commitment, Egypt and with its partners in the New Agenda Coalition, will be presenting two draft resolutions that address, inter-alia, the need to reverse the laxity that has crept into global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts since May 2000. The first is "Towards a Nuclear Weapon Free world: A New Agenda" and the second "Reduction Of Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons". While they both convey a similar message, the latter resolution stresses the need for reducing non-strategic nuclear weapons as an essential step towards ridding our world of nuclear weapons. Egypt associates itself with the statement delivered by the delegation of Brazil on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition on October 6th.

Among the more serious challenges facing multilateral efforts in arms control and non-proliferation is the updating of strategic doctrines in a manner that sets out new rationales for the retention of nuclear weapons, their development and deployment, and even for

their possible use. Equally critical is the challenge to multilateral action in the field of disarmament and international peace and security. The impasse in the CD is a clear example; it begs the question of whether there is in fact a future for the CD. While we welcome the new ideas that emerged during the past year which may pave the way for an agreed Programme of Work for the CD in 2004, we must recognize that the crisis in the Conference on Disarmament is symptomatic of a much deeper malaise in the state of international relations particularly the role of multilateral action in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Non-Proliferation: since the last session of the General Assembly, events in the Middle East can be described, without exaggeration, as unprecedented and the level of violence in excess of what any of us might have contemplated. Yet we have yet to see any serious effort at addressing the risks of nuclear proliferation in the region despite the overwhelming support for this objective from States members of the UN and Parties to the NPT.

The achievement of universal adherence to the NPT in the Middle East remains a priority for Egypt, and we will continue to pursue this issue in the General Assembly through a draft 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 is not yet party to the NPT, to accede to the Treaty.

We welcome Iran's stated willingness to cooperate with the IAEA which should enable the Director General of the IAEA to fulfill the mandate given him by the Board of Governors. We must also stress that if the non-proliferation regime is to remain credible, effective and universal, it must address the legitimate security concerns of all its member states.

Missiles: Another equally pertinent issue is that of missiles. It is our view that the credibility and success of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation or any other instrument will depend largely on whether it is able to address the issues pertinent to the debate on missiles in a balanced and objective manner.

Small Arms: We welcome the successful outcome of the First Biennial Meeting held last July, a success due in no small part to the devotion and tireless efforts of Ambassador Inoguchi of Japan. We recall the responsibility of States to implement fully at the national level the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms. This is essential if regional and global commitments are to be achieved or have any value.

Reform of the First Committee: We believe that the debate on reform of the First Committee and any actual steps that may be agreed upon should fully respect the role of the General Assembly in the areas of disarmament and international security, and we stress the utmost importance of maintaining a substantive balance between the issues before the General Assembly relating to disarmament and international security

Thank you