



*PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM
OF LESOTHO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT

BY

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DURING THE

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 58TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at the outset to extend my congratulations to you and other members of the Bureau on your election to steer the work of the First Committee. My delegation is confident that with your rich experience and able leadership, you will guide us to a successful conclusion of our work. Let me assure you of the full cooperation and support from my delegation. Let me also take this opportunity to extend sincere thanks to Mr. Graham Maitland of South Africa, for his excellent work as the Chairman of this Committee during the last session.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Nobuyasu Abe upon his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and express appreciation for his introductory statement which has formed a useful basis for our deliberations. Furthermore, my delegation pays tribute to the former Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala for his invaluable contribution to multilateral disarmaments efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation welcomes the outcome of the First Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which took place here in New York, this past July. At this juncture, Mr. Chairman, let me also express my delegation's appreciation of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit arms and light weapons. We are confident that this report will provide a useful tool in our deliberations on the subject. It is also our hope that the General Assembly will act upon the recommendations of the Group.

The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho realizes the importance of bilateral, regional and international cooperation and supports all initiatives aimed at combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Lesotho is party to the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which was adopted in August 2001. Furthermore, just recently, on 24 September 2003, Lesotho deposited her instrument of accession to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, Supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Lesotho is committed to the full implementation of these instruments. It was for the same reason that she requested

her sole neighbour, South Africa, to provide technical assistance that enabled the destruction, in November 2001, of 4,240 excess and redundant state-owned small arms.

Mr. Chairman,

There is a consensus that terrorism is the greatest menace of our time. There is also little doubt, if any, that it is only through multilateral efforts that the international community can win the war against terrorism. My delegation shares the fear that, unless appropriate joint and collective measures are taken, non-State actors might acquire and use weapons of mass destruction. We also cannot afford to undermine the great danger posed by conventional weapons, small arms and landmines. We therefore wish to reiterate the importance of ratifying/acceding to and fully implementing multilateral disarmament treaties including the following to which Lesotho is a party: the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Ottawa Treaty on Anti-personnel Mines. We also wish to encourage all the signatories to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba) to ratify it as soon as possible. Furthermore, we appeal to relevant States to honour the 13 steps agreed upon at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

Lesotho is also disappointed by the lack of progress in the Disarmament Conference, which is the only forum of negotiation on disarmament issues. We are also very discouraged by the fact that the work of the UN Disarmament Commission has also failed to take a positive turn to advance either nuclear disarmament or confidence building measures in the field of disarmament.

Mr Chairman,

It is very unfortunate that even though several delegations have declared that they welcomed the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the open-ended Working Group which was given the mandate to consider, among other things, the objectives and agenda for the session, failed to reach consensus and underlined the need for the issue to be referred back to the General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

The year 2003 saw many setbacks in the area of disarmament as well as the increase in threats to peace and security, and yet there is still no reason to despair. We have a magnitude of multilateral disarmament agreements to fall back on and our hope lies in the universal and full implementation of those treaties. I thank you.