



**Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia
to the United Nations**

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STATEMENT

BY

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AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**

AT

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

NEW YORK, 9 OCTOBER 2003

Mr. Chairman,

Let me, at the outset, congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election, and assure you that we place our confidence in your capacity to successfully guide our deliberations.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the cardinal objectives of the United Nations is to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. In furtherance of this objective, the United Nations, since its inception, has embarked on disarmament measures. It was remarkable that even during the period of superpower rivalry, discussions and agreements on disarmament continued. Thus, the United Nations, unlike the League of Nations, proved to be an effective Organization, not necessarily for achieving disarmament, but for maintaining dialogue over levels and the regulation of armaments. This dialogue has, in recent years, resulted in positive gains, which include, the adoption and the entering into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Ottawa Convention banning landmines. Nuclear-weapons-free zones have also been established in various parts of the world and nuclear safeguards have been strengthened.

Despite these positive developments, the rest of the picture is much gloomy. International peace and security continue to face profound challenges in the form of nuclear weapons and conventional arms. While most of the non-nuclear-weapons States continue to meet their obligations under multilateral treaties, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), nuclear-weapons States and other key States are unwilling to implement their obligations, and some have even refused to sign and ratify these instruments. Instead, they continue to perfect both conventional arms and nuclear weapons. We are told that this is being done in order to meet new threats and in the name of national security.

Mr. Chairman,

The need for serious nuclear disarmament is being undermined by these claims. To make such claims is a clear invitation to other States to acquire nuclear weapons under the same pretext, as by nature, every State has essential national security interests to protect and new threats to meet. No State or group of States should be allowed to have a monopoly over nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction. The security that all of us are entitled to can only be achieved by means of complete disarmament. With the end of the cold war, there can be no justification for some States to claim the exclusive right to possess these weapons indefinitely. Nuclear-weapons States repeatedly remind other States not to acquire nuclear weapons. If their demands are to be taken

seriously, then they should demonstrate concretely their willingness to eliminate their nuclear weapons within the shortest possible time frame.

Mr. Chairman,

Namibia, being a State Party to the NPT and CTBT, continues to fulfill its international obligations under these instruments. States who actually possess nuclear weapons refuse to disarm. The mere mentioning of nuclear disarmament can upset those who possess them, but for them it is easy to call upon other States to remain non-nuclear, and subject them to threats of unilateral action, for allegedly failing to comply with their international obligations under non-proliferation regime. If the provisions of the NPT are to be respected, all States Parties must be equally held accountable when they fail to comply with their respective obligations under the Treaty.

It seems to us that those who possess nuclear weapons are preoccupied with preventing other countries from acquiring nuclear weapons, but not with negotiations aimed at eliminating these weapons under strict and effective international control. In this process, nuclear weapons have become a means of exerting pressure on and blackmailing countries that do not have them. But what nuclear weapons States forget is the fact that such behaviour fosters proliferation. So long as such weapons exist, we have to face the problem of nuclear terrorism with all its ramifications. We believe that the only safe and effective way to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is the complete elimination of these weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Namibia is committed to the objectives of arms control and the principles of openness and transparency in both weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms. We continue to support General Assembly resolutions on transparency in armaments and military expenditures, which require member States to supply information on their conventional arms inventories and expenditures. We view this information as essential, as it can help minimize the risk of arms race and armed conflicts between and among nations. We support the call for the expansion of the scope of the Register to include weapons of mass destruction. In order for the Register to be effective, it should be comprehensive, non-discriminatory and it must address the security concerns of all States.

Mr. Chairman,

As we talk about the proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, we should not forget about the illicit trade in small arms and light

weapons. In Africa, for example, small arms and light weapons are weapons of mass destruction. These weapons are in the hands of rebel groups, including child soldiers. They stifle development, cause havoc, death and destruction on the African continent. It is regrettable to note that none of the countries that are involved in conflict produce these weapons. They come from sources outside Africa who are determined to achieve their selfish political and economic agendas at the expense of the people of Africa. In order to address this menace effectively, there is need for political will and international cooperation among all those involved, in particular the producers, to ensure that their weapons do not end up in wrong hands. Furthermore, we call for a speedy and full implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. All member States have a responsibility to that end.

I thank you.