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*(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)*

***STATEMENT BY  
AMBASSADOR OSWALDO DE RIVERO,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PERU  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
ON BEHALF OF THE RIO GROUP,  
IN THE GENERAL DEBATE ON THE FIRST COMMITTEE***

*NEW YORK OCTOBER 6, 2003*



Mr. Chairman,

I address on behalf of the Member States of the Rio Group, comprised by Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

First of all, I would like to congratulate your appointment to direct the work of the First Committee. From now on, all the Member States of the Rio Group commit themselves to work together in a proactive way, in order to conclude our work successfully. We also congratulate and extend the will of collaboration to the rest of the members of the Board.

There is no doubt that the theme of disarmament is going through difficult times; we are facing, a threatening scenery. Besides the traditional problems, there is the rise of other problems that complicate the development of fundamental themes in our agenda.

Seven years to its signing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) still does not have the necessary number of ratifications in order to go into effect.

It is distressing to see the absence of action in the Conference on Disarmament; in the past years it has not been able to accomplish an agreement on a working programme, particularly on nuclear disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament is the only multilateral forum of negotiation on disarmament, which has been putted to waste.

After 3 years of deliberations, there has not been a consensus in the Committee on Disarmament. In spite of the efforts of many countries, it was not even possible to achieve an agreement on the objectives and agenda of the IV Special Session of the General Assembly on disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

In the last Presidential Summit of the Rio Group, held in Cusco, Peru, on May 2003, our presidents declared that it was crucial to strengthen the initiative capacity of the Group in support of the multilateral system for peace, security and development, based on the strict fulfillment of the International Law and taking into consideration the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Our Group is a permanent mechanism of consultation and political agreement, with more than 16 years since its creation, it has searched the promotion of a dialogue and the adoption of concrete actions to preserve peace, strengthen democracy and advocate development in the Latin American region.

With the Treaty of Tlatelolco, our region served as a model to the establishment of other free zones of nuclear weapons. The full entry into force of the Treaty of Tlatelolco confirms that this type of agreements fortify the regimen of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; which makes it vital to encourage the consolidation of all the treaties that establish free zones of nuclear weapons.

We commit to the proposal contained in the Millennium Declaration to request an International Conference to determine appropriate ways to eliminate the nuclear dangers; and we urge to the rest of the countries to discuss it in order to make it a reality.

The Rio Group reaffirms its compromise to the fulfillment of the international legal instruments in support to disarmament and the non-proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction. We participate vigorously in the Preparatory Commissions for the Conference on the Revision of the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of 2005. Although, we regret the small progress done in order to obtain the complete application of the Thirteen Measures on Nuclear Disarmament included in the final document of the Conference of the year 2000, we are convinced that it is essential to strengthen it and revitalize it.

Next year in New York, the third reunion of the Preparatory Commission of the Conference of the Parties of 2005 of the Non-Proliferation Treaty will take place. We are convinced that this is a fundamental process that must be invigorated with concrete contents and improvements that allow us to be prepared in advance for the Conference of 2005.

The Rio Group manifests its preoccupation for the unexpected development of new nuclear weapons and doctrines of security that intend their possible use.

We endorse the results of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry-into-Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and we invite all the States to become part of this important instrument.

We are convinced that the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction is the best way to achieve peace and international securities. In this context, we hope that in Geneva we advance the negotiations to strengthen the Convention on the Prohibition of Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, in the matter of verification. We consider that the Convention for the Prohibition, Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction represents a significant instrument to achieve disarmament.

The Rio Group is following carefully the initiatives that have been developing regarding measures of protection and nuclear security against nuclear terrorism, as well as the two international conferences on the issue, held on October 2002 in Germany, and on March 2003 in Vienna; where it was acknowledged the necessity to reinforce the technological and physical security of nuclear material and radioactive sources. The Rio Group considers that these measures are becoming more important in order to avoid the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; which represent an enormous threat for peace and international securities, particularly if these weapons are acquired by terrorists or non-state actors.

In the issue of conventional weapons, the Member States of the Rio Group have agreed to strengthen bilateral, regional, as well a global measures that stimulate the confidence and security, particularly at the core of the Organization of the American States and of the United Nations, in which the participation in the registration of conventional weapons represents an important contribution to peace and international securities.

We are fully committed with the objectives of the Ottawa Convention on the banning of employment, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines and its destruction. We reiterate our commitment to change our region in a free zone of such type of weapons, and welcome the results of the last Meeting of States Parties of the Convention that took place in Bangkok, on September 2003. We call upon to the international community to provide to the affected countries, the resources and necessary technologies to eradicate this type of weapons, as well as to grant humanitarian assistance to the victims.

In the same way, the Member States of the Rio Group condemn decisively the use and indiscriminately manufacturing of mines done by the non-state actors that hinder the consolidation of a free hemispheric of anti-personnel landmines. In that respect, the Member States of the Rio Group urge the international community to commit in preventing that these individuals or illegal groups use this deadly artifact.

The Rio Group considers that the illicit traffic of small arms and light weapons is a problem of global range that is connected with terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms of violence that threaten the peace and security in the majority of our countries. It is a real and common problem that needs to be eradicated. In that respect, we reiterate our deep preoccupation for the illicit traffic of these weapons, and we renew our compromise with the Plan of Action of the United Nations to prevent, combat, and eliminate this traffic; as well as with the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking of Arms.

The Member States of the Rio Group participated actively in the first Biannual Meeting to examine the execution of the Programme of Action to prevent, combat, and eliminate the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, held in New York, on July of this year; sharing our national reports and exchanging valuable information to apply them in the outlines of the Programme of Action in a concrete manner.

The Rio Group greets the establishment of the Andean Plan for the Prevention of the Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (Decision 552), approved by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Andean Community in Quirama, Colombia, in June 2003.

The Member States of the Rio Group express their satisfaction for the agreement reached by the governments of Central America, in the reunion of the "Security Commission of Central America" that took place in Belize on September 5<sup>th</sup>, with the purpose to implement an "urgent" programme to limit and control the arms in the region. This security agreement includes the limitation of arms to reach a reasonable balance of strength, to generate stability, mutual confidence and transparency; and to avoid that illegal armed groups reach these arms.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, the Member States of the Rio Group wish to express our recognition to the activities of the Regional Center of the United Nations for the Disarmament and Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, located in Lima, Peru. The Center has endorsed several regional initiatives in the issue of disarmament, has stimulated the debates on security, and has contributed to the coordination of the efforts of the United Nations towards Peace and Security in the region.

Thank you.